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Chapter 1

THE HOPE OF RECOVERY

(1 Samuel 30)

DAVID and his men had suffered a great and heavy loss. All their houses had been burnt down and their women and children and possessions had been taken captive by the Amalekites. Their loss was so great that even though they were strong men, they all began to weep loudly. Women can weep at any time and anywhere, and nobody will question them. They can weep in the morning or mid-day or evening! They can weep in the bus or train, on the platform or outside it, and any number of times during the day and nobody will say: Why are you weeping so much? But when men start weeping, there must be a very serious reason. Here were strong military men weeping, so much and so loudly that they had no more tears to shed (vs. 4). Their tears were all dried up, their throats were hot, and their heads were aching, so much so that they could not weep any more. So great was their loss, and, humanly speaking, beyond all hope of recovery.

In the same chapter, however, we read that by God's help and grace, they recovered all that they had lost and much more beside. They recovered so much that they were able to pay all the debts that they had incurred during the previous years. Wherever they had been during those years they had been unable to pay for their food and lodging. Whether they stayed in a place for a few days or months or for a longer time they had been given shelter and food. We see in the Scriptures that David had kept a record of the kindness shown to him. There were many good men who had given him *dhal* and fowl and mutton. He knew who had given him fresh food and who had given him stale food. Verses 27 to 31 give a list of the places where he had stayed, and verse 31 shows that wherever he had stayed, whether for a few days or for a longer time, he now sent gifts to acknowledge kindness shown, and to pay back his debts.

We all feel sad when we lose anything, and all of us have lost something, somewhere and at sometime or other. Some have wept because of what they have lost. Some have lost their keys or fountain pens, or have forgotten their umbrellas. Others have lost their bedding in the train, or have forgotten their wrist watches! Whatever the loss may be it makes us feel very sad, but if and whenever we recover such lost things we are filled with joy. It is a peculiar joy to recover what we have lost, and especially when there has been no hope of recovery.

Some time ago one brother in Hebron was given a sum of Rs. 130 to pay a telephone bill and he kept the

paper and the money in a drawer. He was very busy that day, and thought he would pay the bill the next day. The next day it was the same. He was so busy that he thought he would pay the bill the following day. The third day, when he went to pay the bill, he could not find either the bill or the money. He began to search for it throughout the office. He opened every drawer and almirah and looked into every corner, but could not find the bill or the money.

All of us were very sad when we heard that and began to suspect different persons. Could it be this one? Or could it be so and so? Then we bought new locks that very day and became very, very careful, so suspicious were we of everybody in the office. After two months, however, when they were trying to clean every room in the building they came to the back room, and there saw an almirah. They wanted to clean at the back of the almirah so they moved it and found a hole in the wall. In that hole they found the bill and the amount!

What a clever and highly-trained rat it must have been to have taken it from the one room to the other! We had entertained no hopes of recovering that money, yet we had prayed: 'Lord, help us to recover that amount somehow, and help us to catch the thief.' Now we had recovered both the bill and the amount, and later also caught the thief! What a joy was that recovery! Everybody in the compound was happy that day, saying 'We have recovered the loss! We have recovered the loss!'

So it is with us spiritually! We have many spiritual losses because of our faults and failures. There are many in fact who have lost their joy. Some, because of trouble and trial, may have lost their faith. Others may have lost their consciousness of God's presence. Others have not yet learned the secret of finding God's will.

Many have lost the old power they had when they were first born again. Others have lost their first love. How many hearts there are with some spiritual loss. They are not enjoying their Bibles as before. They have not got the same burden for prayer as once they had. Some weep openly and some secretly, but they have no faith to recover what they have lost. They *want* to recover it but they do not know how to recover it, and worse still they have lost the hope of recovery. They are saying in their hearts, 'Maybe I will never get my former joy and peace again'. They may be saying: 'I can never do the Lord's service as before'. Whatever it may be that you have lost spiritually we have a message for you. Whatever the cause of your loss may be, there is hope for you. Your loss *can* be recovered. Rather, you can receive much more than you have lost.

The Bible begins with the story of a very great loss (Genesis 3:24), but in the same book God has proved to man that though in the beginning Adam lost everything, yet man is able to recover everything through our Lord Jesus Christ. In Genesis 1:28, God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden. He also gave him power and dominion over the whole earth and over the fish and the birds and animals. In a very real sense he was the king of the whole earth.

Yet, in chapter 3 he was driven out as a thief and the Word of God says it was God Himself who drove him out. In the beginning he could talk to God as man to man, but now he was being driven out from the presence of God. He was driven out from his home in the Garden of Eden and had to surrender all his rights. What a tremendous loss! No man can estimate the loss incurred by the first man, Adam. But in Revelation 21 and 22, we see how the loss in Genesis 3 has been recovered. There we find man ruling the new creation, which will be far more glorious than the old.

In fact God has given to man much more than was lost in Genesis 3. God began the recovery by the power of the Cross. That is why you find the word Lamb repeated twenty-eight times in the Book of Revelation. The message is that every loss of every sinner and every loss of every believer can be recovered by God's grace and by His help, as revealed in the sacrifice of Calvary.

We can divide people into two groups: There are people who have not received salvation. So far they have not found true peace. They cannot say that God has forgiven their sins. They are living without hope and without God. Life for them is a life of defeat, of misery, and of darkness. They have nothing in the world that they can call their own. They are beggars living in poverty and thus their time, money, and energy are being wasted day by day. That is one group of people, who are in darkness, and whose whole life is being wasted and lost. When they are about to die they will cry out, knowingly or unknowingly: 'My life is wasted. Soon I will be dead! but my life is wasted!'

With what sorrow they will say those words, admitting that whatever they had possessed, or whatever they had done in life, was only a waste!

Examine your own heart truthfully — How is *your* condition before God? Is your life being wasted? What are *you* really accomplishing in *your* life by your time, your money, or your energy? Do these things give you real peace and joy? Are you of any use to God? Can you say God has used something of your life? Please be honest and truthful with yourself.

As a sinner your life most certainly is being wasted. The Scriptures describe even our righteousness as filthy rags. Even though we may say we are a great and wealthy people and can boast that we earn much money, if we are living in sin, God likens our best efforts to filthy rags. I have seen some rags so dirty and rotten that even lepers and poor beggars will not touch them. That is like the heart of man, filthy and hopeless. Even our *righteousness*, in the sight of God, is like 'filthy rags' (Isaiah 64:6). Unless our sins are forgiven and our hearts are cleansed, we shall remain as filthy rags and our time, money and energy will all be a waste. But, praise God, we can be transformed into precious stones in the House of God provided our hearts are cleansed. Are *you* willing and desirous for your sins to be forgiven? Jesus Christ came into the world and died and rose again, that we might recover every loss. Even though we have wasted our lives all these years, now we can again become God's co-workers and partners (1 Cor. 3:9).

Have you seen a good gardener working upon a good field or a good garden? What preparation he puts in before he starts working that ground. Once it may have been very bad and hopeless, full of thorns and thistles, but after a few months the very same field will be yielding fruits in abundance and many colourful flowers. Every inch of it is used. To produce these results, the garden had to be worked upon day and night. The ground needed much preparation. Every stone had to be removed, then the seeds had to be sown and watered every day, and for weeks and months watched over day by day. It is hard to believe at last that it is the same land or field that is now yielding all these things.

In the same way God who compared us to filthy rags, will be able to say, 'My beautiful husbandry! My beautiful garden!' That is how your life can be transformed. Every loss incurred by your sins can be recovered. Because of your sins you have brought reproach upon your own name, your family name and the name of your God. Through your sins you have ruined your life, health and body. Because of your sins you are far away from God. You have not the least understanding of the things of God. You are a fool before God and whatever you are doing is a waste. You will die without hope.

Do you want to be transformed? We have a message for you. Come to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come with a repentant heart, feeling sorry for your sins. This day the Lord will forgive you and transform you.

That is why
to save you.

Thirty-one years ago my life was being wasted; completely and absolutely wasted. I was then living a life of shame, defeat and barrenness, but I can testify that all that I now say and do are of eternal abiding value. If I do something wrong my Lord is there to correct me and chastise me and bring me back.

David suffered four great losses in his life-time, and we too as believers suffer in our life-time great losses. By the grace of God and His help David recovered all these losses. In every case there was no hope of recovery, but by the help of God he recovered all those four great losses, and not only what he had lost, but much more beside. We also as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, suffer many losses because of doubts and folly, blindness and defeat, but from God's Word we can see how every spiritual loss in a believer can be recovered.

With the division of Pakistan and India in 1947, many Hindus and Sikhs were driven out from their homes, and when they were told by the Government to prepare a list of the things they had lost or left behind, they gave their lists to the Government in hope of recovering some compensation. But many gave false statements. If they had lost Rs. 6,000 they mentioned Rs. 26,000.

That is worldly wisdom! Be honest and sincere with God and yourselves and let God recover your losses

for you. Pray to Him: 'Lord, do Thou help me to recover all my losses.' Have you lost your peace? Have you lost your joy or has your faith become somewhat weak? Is your mind full of doubts? Have you lost your hunger and appetite for God's Word?

I know some people who can eat a great deal of rice. They can eat a first, second, third, and even fourth helping! They want a dozen *chappatis*, a dozen *purees*, curds, etc; yet when they are sick they refuse to eat even a small quantity. Everybody looking at such a man knows he must be sick! 'I saw him eat so much before', he thinks, 'but now he refuses to eat and needs to be forced!'

Spiritually, what has happened to your appetite for God's Word? In the early days of your Christian life you used to read many chapters and with great joy attended every meeting, but now you find it difficult to read even half a chapter. You have lost your appetite for God's Word, lost your burden for prayer, lost your understanding of God's Word and you do not know how to enjoy God's presence. You have lost many privileges in the House of God. Please tell God frankly of all your losses and then pray: 'Now, Lord, do Thou help me to recover all my losses.' You are assured from God's Word that you will recover much more than you have lost.

There are some laundries in England, where, if your clothes are lost or torn by the *dhobi*, they will write to you and say: 'We are very sorry that your *dhoti* or shirt has been lost or torn, please let us know exactly

what it was. For if your clothes are lost or torn while in their service they will make good your loss. Upon receiving your complaint they will say, 'Please let us know your measurements, and we will give you a new garment.' Even though the coat you have lost may have been an old one, they will give you a new one instead.

This had happened to me in England, -- not in *India*. Once the laundry spoiled my coat, and then gave me money for a new one, with which I got one even better. But God will do much more for you than England did for me. He will give you much more than you lost. But you must be honest and truthful and sincere and tell Him all about your loss. We will see from God's Word as we study further how David recovered his four losses, and then how we also can recover all that we have lost spiritually.

Chapter 2

THE LESSON OF THE AXE HEAD

(2 Kings 6:1-7)

THERE are many people who are continually suffering spiritual losses in their lives. But we believe that God wants us to recover every loss; He does not want us to lose anything. When He gives us something, whatever it may be, He gives it to us to enjoy and retain for eternity. We are given everlasting life, not for a few years only, but for eternity, and that life must flow in us and through us for eternity. Even though the enemy may seek to prevent the flow in full measure God wants to remove every obstacle and ensure a full flow all the time.

In the taps in your home, there may not always be a full flow of water. Nothing is wrong with the water supply, for there is plenty of water in the water tank, but there is a blockage in the waterpipe. You get a plumber who knows his job and he removes the obstacle and the water flows freely once again. In other homes there are often leaking taps. The tap goes on leaking hour after hour and there is much wastage

yet it needs only a new washer and the leaking will stop. We once had such a tap at the back of our house and it kept on leaking for many years, and much water was wasted. Nobody would take the pains to put on a new washer to stop the leakage. Then one day someone had mercy upon us and changed the washer, and the tap stopped leaking.

There are also many leaking believers. They are wasting everything: their time, money and energy are being mis-spent. Sometimes only a simple thing is necessary to stop the leakage and wastage. Yet, whether we lose things through negligence or through folly, the loss can be recovered. The Scripture tells us that whatever is lost spiritually can be recovered. It may seem impossible, but by the help of God, by His grace and by His word, there can be recovery.

That simple lesson is taught to us in the story in 2 Kings 6:1-7 about the young prophets. Those young men were studying with Elisha and they found the place too small for them. They wanted a larger house, and for this they needed wood. They had to go beyond Jordon to cut the wood, so they all got together and went there, and even though they were young men, and the sons of the prophets, they had some wisdom, and took with them Elisha (verse 3).

They could have said, Why should we be bothered with an old man? He cannot help us in any way. He cannot walk long distances. If he comes with us we may have to carry him, feed him and serve him. That is how many young people feel. They think they should

not serve their fathers because they have studied only to the third class, and cannot spell even one word of English. Young people today think they know so much more than their elders. Maybe their fathers cannot speak fluently. Perhaps they stutter and mutter before they can utter even one word. So the young people question why they should go to such old men and women with their personal problems. They think they are more clever than their parents or relations, and for that reason there are many young lives that have been ruined through folly. These young men however had understanding, and showed it by their request for Elisha to go with them

While they were there felling the wood, one young man lost his axe head, which fell into the water (verse 5) He could not have been a very clever young man, or he would have seen to the axe before he set out. He ought to have seen that the axe handle was strong and the head firmly attached But being inexperienced, he began cutting the wood without noticing that the head was loose, and at the first stroke the axe head fell into the river. It was a deep river and the young man began to cry out: Now, what shall I do?' That axe did not belong to him. He had borrowed it from somebody else, and must have promised that after he had cut the wood, he would return the axe safely to the owner. As the son of a prophet he must keep his promise.

There are many people who know how to borrow They are very, very clever. Whenever they want to borrow anything, particularly money, they look very

innocent, and say, 'I will pay you back immediately, the very day I get my wages.' By the manner they speak, the lender s heart is softened. He says in his heart, 'I must help this poor man. He looks a good man, and will surely keep his word. So what the borrower asks is given to him. But does he keep his word? Things that were borrowed last year are not returned yet! When you remind such people, at first they answer nicely, but after a few days they become your enemies. They know how to borrow, but they never learn how to pay back.

Many believers have lost their joy and peace and rights in this way. They cannot keep their word. They do not keep their promises. They do not pay their debts. But the young man in this story, even though through his own folly he had lost the axe head, he wanted to return it He had no money to buy a new one and that is why he was sad Alas, what shall I do? How can I face that man? I said so solemnly, "I will bring back your axe safely to you." Now I have lost it. What shall I do?'

He was a wise young man, however, and instead of going to the young people, he went to Elisha. He could have said, My young companions, my axe has fallen into the water, please go into the water and get it for me ' Being a wise young man, however, he went to Elisha, an old man, rather than to the young men (verses 15·16). He said to him, 'Alas, my master!' He had faith that if anybody could help him, at any time, it was only Elisha (verse 15). When that young man went to Elisha and appealed for help, he confessed his

inability and acknowledged his failure. He said, Alas, my master, what I should do? Elisha said, 'Show me the place where the axe fell So the young man pointed it out, and Elisha cut down a branch of the tree and dropped it into the water. Immediately the axe began to float. Like a piece of straw, the iron came to the surface and began to float on the water. That is how the young man recovered his loss. It is a simple story, but full of deep meaning, to teach us how every spiritual loss can be recovered

We should note that in the first place, the young men requested Elisha to go with them. In the same way, make it a point, whenever you go anywhere, and wherever you go, to make sure that the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Elisha, goes with you. Don't depend upon your own strength or wisdom for your blessing or prosperity. If the Lord does not go with you, then whatever you do, will never be prosperous.

Secondly, when you do lose something, do not be ashamed to confess it. This young man could have said, 'It was not my fault, the handle was broken But he made no attempt to cover his fault. Confess your faults readily. Do not cover your folly and shame; and do not go to others for help, go directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. The young man first came to Elisha. You also go first to Christ. Go to His feet. Humble yourself and confess your loss and failures to Him.

Let your prayer be. Alas, my Master, what shall I do? Let Christ take you to the place where the loss took place. Be willing and prepared to see how God

will help you. That stick cut by Elisha speaks of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. For our sins He hung on a tree and died for us, and by the same Cross our loss can be recovered. The iron began to swim, though it is impossible for iron to swim. But in the hand of Elisha such a feat was nothing. In the same manner, it is by faith we apply the Cross in our lives, and through it we will see every loss recovered.

Now, that young man could go forth with a new experience and a new faith. The loss had been fully recovered, and he had also recovered his peace and joy and wisdom. May God help you in the same way.

Remember this simple rule. First of all, show Him the place where the loss began in your life and go to that very place and say, 'Yes, Lord, on such and such a date, and at such and such a time, I behaved like a fool, and that is why there is this loss in my life.' If you go to the Lord with that confession, by the power of the Cross, He will help you to recover every loss. The Cross is the power of God, and faith is necessary — a simple and living faith.

'David recovered all.' Put your name in the place of David's and realize that you can recover your loss, whoever you may be; and you can also get much more that you ever lost. Our Lord is with us. He said: 'Lo, I am with you always.' Do not hesitate to go to Him. Tell Him your losses. Believe also that He died on the Cross on your behalf to help you to recover those losses.

Chapter 3

DAVID'S FIRST LOSS

(1 Samuel 29-30)

LET us always remember this point, that spiritual loss can be fully recovered. However great your loss may be and whatever its cause, it *can* be recovered, and in fact, in recovery we receive much more than we have lost. However, we must be willing to obey God's Word and His divine laws which no man can change, nor can they be changed by wealth, education or position. What is more, these laws are applicable to everybody.

We have seen already that David suffered much loss. Even though he was a good, wise and kind king, and a man after God's own heart, he was deceived by the devil on four occasions and suffered four great losses, but with the help of God, and by his grace he recovered all. Let us look at the causes for the four losses, and then see how he recovered all that he lost.

The first is in 1 Samuel 29:1-4. David wanted to join the army of the Philistines against Saul. Saul was David's

enemy and tried to kill him on several occasions because God had chosen David to be king instead of Saul. For many years Saul was trying to kill David and David was running here and there seeking shelter. At last he found shelter with the king of the Philistines.

The Philistines, led by their princes, gathered together and went to battle against Saul. David went with them, but the princes of the Philistines became suspicious and said: 'He is a Hebrew and what if he leaves our army and joins Saul's? Only Achish, the king, trusted David. He said, 'I have known David very well for many years. He has been staying with us for such a long time, we can surely trust him. The other princes of the Philistines did not believe David and he was compelled to go back, very sad and disappointed

He was sad because he thought: 'Saul, my enemy, has been trying to kill me all these many years. I have done him no harm. Even though I could have killed him on two occasions, I spared him and yet he wants to kill me.' At last he had joined the army of the Philistines who were going up against Saul to battle. David knew that Saul had been anointed king by Samuel and though Saul had been disobedient to God's Word, yet he was still God s anointed That is why God had not allowed David to touch Saul, but David had become impatient He was tired of suffering, so he was saying in his heart, 'I have done no harm to Saul and yet he wants to kill me. I have no shelter or place to stay; I am depending on my friends for my home, food and clothing. How long can I suffer? There is a limit to everything.'

That is how we also argue in our hearts when our suffering goes on for a long time. We say, 'How long can I suffer? After all, I am a human being. I am not an angel I am not a supernatural being. Look at poor me, for the last so many years I have been suffering so much I read my Bible and do everything I can to please God. I am not doing anybody any harm, and yet God does not look on my affliction.'

That is how we start murmuring. We have doubts and fears and we begin to use the wrong weapons to overcome our trials But David was a man of God. He knew God. He had experienced God's intervention on many occasions, and he always went to God for help and consulted the Lord before he went anywhere. He knew also how to find the will of God.

In 1 Samuel 3:1-10 we see how David consulted the high priest to find God's will before going anywhere. In the Old Testament the high priest with the help of the stones of the Urim and Thummin was able to find God s will, so any person having any matter upon his heart consulted the high priest. He would go to him and say: 'Please find out God's will for me in this matter.'

Now David knew that on many occasions God had been with him to help him, yet on this occasion, without consulting God, he had joined the Philistines Rather than depend upon the Lord he had become impatient to take revenge upon Saul, and was saying in a human way 'I have suffered so much at the hand of Saul Even though I have been anointed king, yet here I am living

in caves without shelter and home and food. I am not going to wait any longer.' So he had decided to join the army of the Philistines.

* * *

When David and his men returned to Ziklag they found their houses burnt. They found their women and children gone and their stuff looted by the Amalekites. All this was due to David's failure. He ought to have consulted God before going to the Philistines, but had been depending upon his own wisdom and strength at that time. When he came back, he found that all the huts had been burnt and that the enemy had taken away their stuff and the women and children as captives. So they all began to weep, and they wept loudly and long. They wept till they could weep no more, so great was their sorrow.

David's men even wanted to stone him. When troubles come, even our friends become our enemies! (1 Samuel 30:6). David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him. They were his soldiers, but because of their trouble they wanted to stone their leader! David was left alone. The Philistines did not want him, and now his own men were saying, 'We will stone you.' He was alone, quite alone. He had lost his wives and children --- everything. Then suddenly he came to his senses (verse 6). Underline these words, and one day they will help you when you are forsaken by your dear ones, and when even those whom you love forsake you. *David encouraged himself in the Lord.* He came to his senses and said, 'O God, forgive me for my failures, for

not finding Your will before I joined the Philistines. Lord, forgive me. Now I have nobody to be my friend or to sympathise with me.'

Then David sent for the priest, Abiathar, and asked him, Please, find out God's will for me. What shall we do? Shall we go against our enemies the Amalekites?' God said, Yes, go. Again he said, Now, Lord, if we go, will we recover all that we have lost?' And God said: (verse 8, last part) 'Without fail, without fail you *will* recover all.'

God spoke and David believed God and they went after the Amalekites. In the field they found an Egyptian lying on the ground, sick, so they gave him some food and water. He was revived and David asked him, 'Who are you?' He said, 'I am one of the servants of the Amalekites and on the way I fell sick and my master left me in the field and they are gone. With the help of that man David found the place where the Amalekites were encamping, and they were eating and drinking and dancing with joy. Suddenly David and his men came upon them and recovered their wives and children, and stuff, and also spoiled the Amalekites. The spoil was so great that they were able to pay in full all the debts they had incurred. As we had seen earlier David also sent gifts and presents to all the people with whom he had been staying.

We read in the next chapter 31:3-6 about the battle of the Philistines against Saul. In that battle Saul died. When David had tried to kill Saul God would not allow him to do so, because Saul was God's anointed

Now Saul and his sons had been killed in the battle. There had been no need for David to fight against Saul. Unknown to David, God was working on his behalf. God had chosen David for a great and high service. He was not only God's king but had been chosen by God as a prophet. He was not only God s prophet, but one who had also received from God His heavenly plan That is why he had to be refined in many refining fires. We as believers have also been chosen by God for a very high and lofty purpose and that is why we too have to go through extreme suffering to be ready for that calling. It is for us to find out God's will for our lives.

In the Old Testament, people had to go to the high priest, but now God Himself is our High Priest. He is our Saviour, our Lord, our King, our Friend, and also our Advocate.We can go to Him at any time. The priest was given two stones, the Urim and the Thummim, but now the Lord Jesus Christ has put in us these two stones divine light and divine truth According to Psalm 43:3 when we go into the house of God to find God's will, His light and His truth, as the indwelling Christ in our heart, will lead us.

He is our truth and our light and our guidance. But many believers do not exercise their rights. Without consulting God they go to somebody else for advice. Some believers make their own plans and use their own brains. They think much more of their friends and their worldly wisdom Rather than be governed by God s will they are governed by worldly wisdom. Thus, in business and marriage and other matters they make mistakes and when you question them 'Why did you not wait for

God's will?' they reply, 'How long could I wait? I have waited for so many years. My hair is becoming grey, and who will marry me if I wait too long? No! no! this won't work! I have waited, and waited, and I can wait no longer'

That is the reason why many are suffering today. They have neglected God's will and lost God's plan, and hence are suffering heavy loss. One day, like David, they will weep till they can weep no more, and even their friends will forsake them. Everyone will leave them. Then they will know what it costs to forsake God's will, and to fail to seek His guidance.

Be sure to find God's will. Please do not go with the Philistines, whether they are uncles, aunts, or relations. Do not use your worldly wisdom for any matter, whether they be family matters or church matters. Otherwise, be prepared to weep and weep, and to lose even your intimate friends.

Finally, David came back to God. Oh! thank God for the humility and meekness with which he came to God and encouraged himself in the Lord. David enquired from the Lord, and the Lord spoke to David. Then David recovered all and much more than he had lost. It was a blessed day. He and his men rejoiced and the women and children rejoiced. They got back their household stuff, and David was also able to pay every debt.

Now you can prove for yourself, that not only will God recover your losses, but your sorrows will be

changed to joy when you come back to the Lord. Do not depend on the Philistines and your friends but learn to put your trust in Christ alone. Learn to enquire of God in every situation, seek to know His will, to hear His voice and to obey Him, and though the situation may be impossible, still obey Him.

Chapter 4

DAVID'S SECOND LOSS

(1 Chronicles 13 & 15)

NOW let us look at the second great loss that David had incurred. Let us first read two portions from God's Word. The first portion we find in 1 Chron. 13 and the second in 1 Chron. 15. With what zeal and labour David sought to bring again the ark of God to its place. But alas! Instead of gathering the Israelites and the sons of Aaron and the sons of the Kohathites as commanded by God in Numbers 4 and 7, he used his own human wisdom and zeal to carry the ark in a new cart. This had been done by the Philistines in 1 Sam. 6.

You may remember how the ark of God was captured by the Philistines in 1 Sam. and how, because of it a great judgement had fallen upon them when they set the ark first in the house of their god Dagon, and then sent it to Gath and Ekron. Wherever the ark of God was taken the judgement fell (1 Sam. 5.10-12). At last in Chapter 6 the Philistines sent the ark of God back to the land of Israel.

Years later, when David thought of bringing the ark of God again to its place he first imitated the Philistines. God had so clearly commanded in Numbers 4.15 and 7:9, that the ark of God was to be carried only by the sons of Kohath, the sons of the Levites, upon their shoulders. It was never to be carried in a cart. Yet now David in his zeal, instead of consulting with the Levites, consulted with the captain of thousands and hundreds, as we read in 1 Chron. 13:1. "And all the congregation said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people" (verse 4).

The result was that the ark was placed on a new cart and on the way the oxen stumbled and when Uzza put forth his hand to steady the ark, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza so that He smote him. Thus they could not bring the ark to its place. But in chapter 15 we read how David repented of the very serious mistake made in chapter 13. Then he gathered the Levites and the children of Aaron together (1 Chron. 15.4-5, 11-13), and confessed that he had not sought the Lord after the divine order revealed so plainly and clearly in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, and consequently he and the whole nation had suffered a very heavy loss. Now when he began to obey and follow the divine order as revealed in the Word of God, with great joy he and all the people were able to bring the ark of God to its rightful place (1 Chron. 15.28).

After this great event David wrote the wonderful song of thanksgiving which we have as Psalm 105, and we find those words expressing the thoughts that filled

the heart of David after the ark had been brought to its place. "O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon His Name, make known His deeds among the people, talk ye of all His wondrous works" etc (vs. 1-7; 14, 15).

David's heart was full of praise and he was exulting in the Lord, and saying to the people: "Seek ye the Lord and His strength, seek His face evermore" (verse 4). Unless we seek God's face constantly and try to find His heavenly plan in every matter, seeking to follow His order in all our activities, duties and plans, whether in the house or in the church, we are bound to suffer very heavy loss We cannot be governed by our zeal, or wisdom, or judgement

Today there is very great loss among God s people, because of the failure to follow God s Word. For example, God s Word is so clear that elders and deacons are never to be chosen by election, but that after much prayer and oneness of heart they should be brought forward, and only after they have been fully tested, should be set apart.

Alas! for this spiritual ministry in the House of God, we find in almost every part of the world, and in almost every Christian congregation, that the elders or church committee members, or whatever you may like to call them, are elected by voting. Even those people who believe in finding elders by prayer become so careless and negligent in this very important task that without praying together as God s servants and co-workers concerning this matter, they are governed by a man's human qualifications, by his ability to speak, or by his

worldly position or other resources. That is why there is so much strife and contention and jealousy in some congregations, because those that were defeated in the election of church committee members or elders begin to fight with those who were elected, and this strife has its effect on all the people in the congregation. The result is barrenness and spiritual infancy, and people come and go away hungry from the services.

Again in the early church, when the believers were in need they trusted God. They never had to beg for their money, nor had to go about giving hints to others, but trusted God, and God helped them.

In these days, however, it has become quite a fashion, when believers want money, to start giving hints, or making appeals, even going to the extent of using high-pressure methods in order to squeeze money from people's pockets. Such money cannot be sanctified by God, and because such people have entirely ignored the Word of God and the order of God, they are suffering spiritual losses.

Though David was a great king, and had fought many battles, and was a man after God's own heart, yes, even though he was a very wise king and God had used him mightily, yet he was trying in his own wisdom to bring the ark of God to its place, and all the people thought it was the right thing to do. They all agreed with him when he suggested to the military captains and generals and officers that they should organise a grand military procession and bring home the ark in triumph. They all thought that they were

doing a great service for God, but it was all entirely according to their own wisdom, and not according to the Word of God and the divine plan.

Later when David repented of his mistake, God forgave him, for God is merciful and gracious, and if we humble ourselves and confess our failures and mistakes, He forgives us and helps us to recover every loss. The result was that a great joy was experienced by the whole nation and God's Word was honoured when the ark of God was carried to its place upon the shoulders of the sons of the Kohathites as God had commanded.

Now the ark of God speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Only those who are truly born again and those who are called by him have the privilege of presenting His claims and showing to the people the way of salvation. Alas! Again we find in these days so many men who are never called by God to His service, but are simply thrust into the mission fields. The result is that more than sixty-five per cent of the missionaries who go out from countries like England or Scotland or America or Canada or Australia, never return to their respective mission fields after their first term of five years is over. They go back home disappointed, and in many cases broken hearted. They go back with a mental break-down because they were never called by God, but were sent out by some committee, or because of some human influence.

In the same way, many persons have been given positions in Christian circles, because of their wealth or

position, but they have never been called by God for that service, and are therefore unable to govern church affairs according to God's will.

The same can be said about marriages. There are so many people who use their human wisdom when they consider marriage. As young people they like each other, and are very much attracted to each other, but they are governed only by those feelings of affection or love or attraction. Maybe they are positive at that time that God wants them to be joined together as life partners, but they never seek the face of the Lord.

I am talking about believers, not unbelievers, because as believers we have the privilege of being able to seek God's face and find his will on every matter God has promised to speak to those who seek His face and His will There are many believers, who, rather than consult God about their marriages and about God's choice for them, consult themselves, their feelings and emotions, or consult their friends and relatives whom they respect, and never go down on their knees about the matter. They refuse to pray with others who could help them by prayer to find God's will, and that is why there are so many unhappy homes. They begin their married lives with high hopes, but soon afterwards the couple find that they cannot get along together and there is constant strife in the family, and unhappiness in their own hearts

In the divine order we, as believers, have the privilege of finding God's perfect will in every matter, whether it be church activity, or ministry or any other

service in the house of God. In these days there are many people full of zeal, who have a great desire to take the gospel to many parts of the country and even to the world. With zeal they go from house to house, street to street, and country to country, spending much time, money and energy, yet they do not seem to accomplish much, nor do they see much fruit.

For the first few months they may be very happy as they see people buying books and showing an interest in the Word of God, but there are very few, comparatively speaking, who are really born again as a result. We cannot blame them, because we are also to blame in similar matters.

I know from my own experience, when I first began my ministry in Karachi several years ago in 1933. I used to go from house to house and street to street with gospels and booklets in many languages, because there were people from many parts of India living in Karachi in those days. I would begin my service early in the morning and was able to distribute a large number of books and tracts and Bibles, and made many wonderful contacts.

Many Hindus, Mohammedans and Sikhs showed interest They invited me to their homes and I was able to sit with them and talk with them for hours about the way of salvation. I gave them my testimony, but I saw no results. Very few were really born again. I thought, however, that I had done my duty! After all souls are not born again in one day, and God in His own time would bless with fruit. But I got discouraged,

and became tired, and wondered why there were no results. So I began to pray: 'Lord, why is it that I don't see results for my labour and ministry? I miss many meals, I walk so many miles, I speak to so many people, I make much sacrifice, yet I do not see any result for it all.

And God said to me clearly: 'I never told you to miss so many meals or to go without food, or to walk so many miles. You are doing everything in your own wisdom.' It was a shock to me. In the beginning, the Lord had spoken to me even before I came to India that I was never to make my own plans, but somehow I had not fully understood what those words meant.

Now I began to see that we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ can seek His face, and before we begin our day we can get His heavenly plan. That day, I decided that I was not going to go out. The Lord was going to speak with me first; so I continued in prayer, and after a long time of prayer God spoke to me, and said to me: 'Today I want you to go to a place called Soldier's Bazaar.' I called my friends, and said: God has spoken to me, that there is some soul ready in Soldier's Bazaar. Kindly come with me.'

They answered, 'It is very far off; it must be about four miles from here, and it is now almost midday. Besides, it is a very hot day. Let us go tomorrow morning, when it is nice and cool.' I said: 'No, the Lord has spoken clearly and I believe there is some hungry heart waiting for the message, and we cannot disappoint him. We must go.'

So, rather unwillingly, they agreed to come with me. We had to walk. In those days we never went by bus or tram from place to place for gospel work. After having walked about three or four miles we saw an open space before a shop, and we stood there, sang a song and began to give a message. A Mohammedan came out of the shop and said: 'Now look here, I am a Mohammedan and this is my shop. I won't allow any Christian to preach before my shop. I said, 'Well, God's message is never forced upon anybody, if we leave you, you will have to give an account to God on the judgement day. We have been sent by Him, and if you don't want us, we will go away. Only you be prepared to give an account to God for this!

We moved on further, and again we saw an open space, and stood there, sang a song and began to preach. Then there came a policeman. He said. 'This is a police station. You cannot stand here.' I said. 'Lord, You told me to go to Soldier's Bazaar, and nobody wants us. However, we decided to go still further, so we went on, and again saw an open space, and the Lord said. 'Now, stop here!' So we preached and sang a song, and had a word of prayer. We always have a word of prayer before we preach, for we find by experience that it is much better to begin the message by prayer. We have made it a rule wherever possible to go down on our knees, for hearts are softened as they see us going on our knees and calling upon God to help us to give His message, and asking that the hearers might receive God's message. So we prayed and after I had finished the message and had a word of prayer a man came to me, a man called Amar

Nath, and said to me: 'Mister, the Lord has sent you for my sake. I am a Hindu graduate from Punjab University, and have been going about in search of peace for four years, but nobody can help me. I have been to many well-known Hindu places, but somehow I have not found satisfaction.'

He added that he had been wishing to meet some true Christians, but he never knew where to go. And he further said: 'I was so happy when I heard you people singing Christian songs. I am sure God has sent you for my sake.' That day he found peace; and a great joy came into my heart as I saw that many were reading out of the Bible and finding true peace in Christ.

From that day the whole picture changed. The Lord took us to all kinds of places; some being even lonely places; and though, numerically, there were few people, the Lord began to save souls. We had decided we would pray together and find God's plan and then go out, and as we did so, people were saved and we began to see results. The work has never ceased since

I remember another time some years ago when God spoke to me and told me to go to a very lonely village called Burnool. I had never been there myself, but having prayed again I heard the voice of God: 'Go to Burnool!' so I said to my friend: Come on, let us go! At a village called Burnool there is someone ready.' He agreed, and we set out. It was a very far off place. We had to go by train about a hundred miles, then walk for some distance, go by boat and then walk again.

I simply knew there was somebody there, and that we must go. We took a few books with us, and the Lord told me to take an Urdu Bible also. So having travelled nearly all day, by train and boat and then walking, we came to the village called Burnool just before sunset. I was standing on one corner of the crossing and my friend on the other side, and as I was standing there, a man came up to me. He said: 'I can see you are a Christian. I am a Mohammedan. This is my village, and I won't allow any Christian to preach in my village.'

I said: 'Well, it is quite true you are a Mohammedan, and this is your village, but I am not sent by any man. I can tell you truthfully, I was sent by God. I don't work for any society, and am not paid for my work. I used to hate the Bible and I used to hate Christians. I was brought up in the Sikh religion, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, without my hearing a sermon or attending a meeting, met me in the month of December 1929, and changed my life completely. Later on I gave my whole life for God's service in 1932, and now He commands me, and I go where He sends me. I obey His Word. He is a living Saviour who died for all sinners. And I have heard His voice, for I never even knew the name of this village.'

Then he asked: 'All right, where are you staying?' and I said: 'Right here.' 'Very well,' he said. 'Come and stay with me!' 'That's very kind of you!' I said, and he answered: 'Suppose I invite the people, will you give a message?' And that man, a Mohammedan headman of the village, sent his servants and gathered a large

number of Hindus and Mohammedans, and he himself became my interpreter. After I had given the message, many people showed interest and bought books, and went home, and then we had some food

After we had food together, a Mohammedan policeman came to me. He said 'Mister, God sent you for my sake.' He then told me that someone had given him an Urdu gospel some years ago and he had read it again and again, waiting for someone to come and explain more fully the way of salvation. It was for this reason God had told me to take the Urdu Bible! When I gave it to him he was so thankful, and soon found true peace.

In this way, whenever we were able to pray together we found results, and blessing, and God's power in a new way. This had happened not only once, but all down these past thirty-two years of the ministry. We have found by experience that when we are able to wait upon the Lord sufficiently and patiently for any ministry, the Lord has been with us in a very special way. That is why there is such blessing when we have gospel campaigns, gospel meetings and holy convocations. We pray and God showers his blessings.

Because we seek God's plan for our ministry, we never had to ask for money. Nowadays we find so many people who when they have a big project in view, and have no money, begin to beg. They feel quite justified in asking for money, and use all kinds of worldly methods, even to taking money from ungodly people. They do not see from the Word of God that the

apostles never had to beg for money. People themselves were constrained, and were taught how to give joytully. We have found in our own service for the Lord in India all these years that we never had to give any hint for money

Sometimes the need had been very great, but we have praved together and because it is the Lord s work and He is responsible for our needs, He has always supplied it. We never had to wait even a single day to pay any bill. We have the promise that the Lord will pay everything on time. However, in every case, we have to make sure first of the Lord's plan and His time for any campaign, or for any gospel ministry of any kind. We do not look to any man, in India or in any other country, for help. But we seek to follow God's order.

This is very important for our personal life, for our family life, and also for our church life. If we follow the divine order then we know that God Himself is responsible for all our needs. When we use our own wisdom, like David, and change God s order, we suffer very heavy loss, and this is a grave warning to us about the necessity for waiting upon the Lord, for obeying His Word and following His order

In the building up of the church this is particularly necessary. We want shepherds after God s own heart, and we have to prav with the church for days, maybe even for weeks and months to find those whom God has called and prepared and chosen for this great task. Whatever the responsibility we have to bear in God s

service we must always seek God's face and His plan. We must never try to change the Word of God, by saying that we are living in a new age, and in different days.

God's Word can never change, so pray that the Lord will help you to recover every loss that you may have incurred whether in your service through serving Him in your own wisdom, or in your married life because you married without seeking His face to find His will. Perhaps through your repentance others will be profited, and if in your married life you indeed both repent of the mistake you made, and ask God's forgiveness, then He will surely forgive you, and you will not only recover every loss, but your lives will be used of Him to the blessing of others.

Chapter 5

DAVID'S THIRD LOSS

(2 Samuel 11)

DAVID *recovered all*. Now let us, each one, put down our own names in that fragment, claiming the truth of those words by faith, and praying that the Holy Spirit may engrave them upon our hearts. Even though you may be extremely stupid and cannot remember anything else, try to remember those few words. *David recovered all*.

Put your own name in the fragment as you repeat the words aloud, and pray that they may truly represent your own experience. It does not matter how great your loss may have been or however shameful its cause, yet it can be recovered. Our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world that every loss incurred by any sinner in any country, and to any degree, might be recovered.

All of us have lost many things from the days of our childhood. We have lost books, pencils, rubbers and

fountain pens in our school days. Some have lost their *chappals*, and others their keys; others again their fountain pens and watches. Can you imagine how many things you have lost down the years? Try to prepare a list and then imagine all those things being brought back to you one day! What a great joy it would be!

In the same way, many have lost their health, some their friends, others their children, and yet others their joy. Just imagine what it would be like to get back all these things, to recover whatever has been lost. But what an even greater joy would be ours if we could recover all that we have lost spiritually. We are so foolish, we do not know how much we are losing spiritually. We require the help of God to help us to estimate rightly our spiritual loss.

The story of David's third loss in 2 Samuel 11 has a message for both believers and unbelievers. First of all, we are made to see the wickedness and deception of man's heart. Whoever we may be, however good and nice we may look outwardly, we are unwardly all equally defiled, filthy and dirty. There is no truth in our lives. We do not want to know our true condition. When we are told about it, our pride is hurt. That is why many people are offended and hurt when reading God's Word.

They are like the ugly man who had never seen a mirror. One day while walking on a footpath somewhere, he found a mirror. He looked at it and for the first time saw his black face. It was blacker than

coal with thick hanging lips and ears. When he saw his ugly face in the mirror he got so angry that he took a piece of stone and broke the glass. He said to the mirror, 'What do you mean? You are insulting me. I am not as black as that. You are a liar.' He broke the mirror, but that did not change his face.

None of us wants to see our true condition. We want to look somewhat better than we are. There are some who in their homes wear very dirty clothes. Their *nightties* look as if they had not been washed for six months. Their pillowcases are so filthy and thick with dirt that they look as if they have not been washed for three years. Yet, when these people go out, they look so nice and sweet, so clean and smart.

There are other people who in their drawing-rooms have everything so clean and nice with costly furniture. But when you go into their bathroom, you require a cloth to cover your nose. When you go to the kitchen everything is black and filthy. Why is this? Because the lady of the house is working, she takes hours to wash her hair and dress nicely, but has no time to care for her house. In the same way, spiritually some people outwardly are one thing and inwardly are another. The Lord knows the true heart condition of each one, and He will tell us exactly what is our real inward condition. Even though it may be very humbling, it is good to know what the Lord has to say about our true condition.

When you go to a doctor for treatment, unless your trouble is properly diagnosed you cannot be treated. There is a disease called tuberculosis. In the early days

they did not know its cause and many thought that they were possessed with demons, if they had that disease. The patient was left in some corner to die, sometimes for many years When, however, men found the cause of the disease, they also discovered a cure.

When I went to Denmark, there were many sanitoriums all standing empty. In the early days when they did not know the cause of the disease, there were many patients, but when they found the cause and the remedy, that disease has been eradicated from the country. In the same way it is good to know the real condition of our hearts. Do not be angry when the Lord, through His servants, and through His Word, shows you your true heart condition. The Bible says the heart of man is desperately wicked and who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9).

Now let us look at the story of David in 2 Sam. 11. When we first met him in 1 Samuel 16:18, nobody could have been more cultured and good than he was. Everybody admitted this. From his youth he had been a God-fearing, wise, honest and good man. Also he was chosen of God. Now a man of any caste or country may be highly educated and cultured, but that does not mean that his inward heart is changed. People do not know their inward nature. David was not born to live a life of sin.

There are some children who are born with evil inclinations and as they grow up they show signs of evil habits, judging by their words and manners That was not true of David. He was a good man, living a good life

for many years. He hated evil and kept away from it. But unknown to David there was a hidden evil nature somewhere, and unless God fully changed him, he could not be used in any great measure.

The incident in 2 Sam. 11, happened in David's life so that David might see himself as God saw him. In a very cunning and subtle way he was tempted by the devil. In the first verse of the chapter, we realize how the devil had been watching and waiting for an opportunity to bring before David this temptation.

The time had come, we are told, for the kings to go to war; and David was a man of war, a mighty man, but, rather than go to war as he ought to have done, he sat at home in Jerusalem. Outwardly this was only a very small failure, but in the sight of God it was a very great failure. He was a man of war, and should have gone to war himself. Instead, he stayed behind in Jerusalem.

The second verse tells us it was eventide and though David was a mighty man he had been sleeping until the evening. There are so many people like this who are sleeping when they should be awake. They can sleep anywhere and at any time, even in meetings! Then if somebody wakes them up and tells them not to go to sleep, they say, 'I was not sleeping, I was just praying!'

In this subtle way the mighty man became a lazy man. Can you not see how step by step the devil was tempting David? Remember the devil is a very cunning and wicked foe. In a very cunning way he tried to bring

about the downfall of David, and while walking leisurely on the roof of the palace, he was brought face to face with temptation.

Later, to cover this sin, David had to think of many ways and means and devices. He had to think of more ways to commit sin in order to cover the sin he had committed and so became a hypocrite. When he discovered his sin was going to be found out, he sent for Uriah, the husband of the woman. When Uriah came, David began to question him about the war, as if he were concerned about Joab and the soldiers and the army. 'Please tell me how Joab is? How are my soldiers? How is the war going?' He made himself appear so innocent, by asking these questions. What hypocrisy! — just to cover his sin! He did not honour Uriah for Uriah's sake, but merely in order to cover his sin. Then he said to him, Uriah, you are very tired. You have to go on a long journey. I am so sorry for you. You must go home and have a hot bath and then go to bed. You require rest.

How good and kind the king was that day. He was only a common soldier, but the king was making so much of him! Uriah had hardly left the palace, when a man took to him many dishes of rich food from the king's table such as *biriyani* and chicken, and other nice things that he would never have seen in his life. How kind king David was that day to Uriah! One sin leads to a second sin and then to a third, and then to a fourth! A great and wise king became a adulterer, then a deceiver, and then a hypocrite, and then a liar, all to cover one sin.

Uriah, however, did not go home but slept at the door of the king's palace. Again David pressed him: 'Uriah, you are still very tired, you can take a few days' leave.' Now, generally, when a soldier applies for leave, it takes six months before it is sanctioned. Even though he may say, 'My wife is sick,' the authorities will say: 'You cannot go.' But here David is saying, 'Without application your leave has been extended for so many days.' Nobody understood why.

But still Uriah did not go his house. While the army was on the battle field he would not seek his own comfort. So David's trick did not work! Finally, he had to cause the death of Uriah through Joab. How sad! A wise king finally became a murderer. He never intended to murder him. He had no thought of becoming an adulterer. He never knew that hidden part of his nature. It is only when temptation came that he knew how evil his heart was.

There are some diseases that are not evident when they are first contracted, even though we may carry the germs in our bodies. It is only after many years that we discover the fact. We do not know it because we are well, and sleeping well and also have hunger for food. When people hear we are ill, they say, 'We did not know that you were not keeping well.' After many years we may begin to feel ill and may even become very seriously ill, but we never knew that disease had been in us all those years.

Why was this story about David recorded in the Bible? It is for our admonition, that we may not be also

deceived by the devil. It is good to know how the devil can deceive us. All of us are born with sinful natures, but that lesson was learned by David only after he had sinned, as he says in Psalm 51, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.' We saw in 1 Samuel 16 how the people were all saying what a fine young man David was — a fine God fearing man, a man of strong faith, loving and good to all. None of these human qualifications can last forever. No man can be always good, and no education of any kind can change our inward nature. We are all born with a sinful nature and one day that sinful nature will manifest itself and make us do shameful things, perhaps after many years.

You cannot hide your true condition before God. God uncovers our sinful nature in order to forgive and change us. Before God could use David as his chosen vessel, He had to change and transform him, and cleanse and purge and wash him. Now see what David says in Psalm 51. He had realized what he was and the true condition of his heart (verses 7, 9 and 10). The very same David who was so highly admired by everybody in the whole country is making this confession. He was making it with a broken heart. 'O God, give me a clean heart. Give me a new heart. Give me a pure heart and purge me and cleanse me, and wash me thoroughly, and blot out all my iniquity.'

You must be willing to know your true condition as God sees it. 'A man may say to you, "You are a sinner." And you reply, "What right do you have to call me a sinner? You ask my neighbours and my friends." But what does God think about you? Please allow God to

examine you. Call sin, sin! There are some people who are blind, but if you say 'O blind man,' they get very angry. But when you say 'Sur Das! how are you?', then they are very happy. In Northern India they never call a blind man, a blind man, they call him Sur Das, after a very famous blind Hindu poet. The Bible calls sin, sin. Whoever you may be, whether a lawyer, a doctor, a cultured man, a rich man, a poor man, or a wise man, before God you are a sinner, a terrible ruined sinner under condemnation, and a filthy man, a dried leaf and a faded flower only, a worm and mere clay.

The Bible says we are born that way. Praise God all these things can be changed. A sinner can become a saint. A filthy man can be cleansed. A sinful and defiled man can be clothed with heavenly garments, and freed from all his sins. Confess to God exactly what you are. Do not try to make any changes in your condition. Say, 'Yes, Lord, I am a sinner,' but do not say, 'I am much better than my neighbour. Do not say: 'I am a graduate sinner, or a cultured sinner.' If you say such things you will remain as you are. Because God loves you, tell Him your true condition and say before Him: 'Lord, wash me. I am filthy and defiled. O God, create in me a clean heart. Take away my old nature.'

In this way you will recover every loss. Your perishing life will become abundantly fruitful. Every word you speak and everything you do will bring forth abiding fruit and the very memory of your sinful life will be gone. When God forgives, He forgives forever. Man will not do that. They cannot forget. But when God forgives, He forgets forever and covers your sins.

Your sins will be gone forever. They will be blotted out, because the Lord Jesus Christ died in your stead and paid the full price of your debt of sin. Ask Him to cleanse your heart, for without your request He can do nothing. Will you say, 'O Lord, create in me a pure and a clean heart. Wash me and purge me and cleanse me thoroughly.' He will hear and answer provided you are sincere and humble before Him.

Chapter 6

LOSS: ITS CAUSE, EFFECT, AND CURE

DAVID *recovered all.* The very words indicate loss. As we have said before, we have all suffered losses of many kinds. Even if we lose old chappals we are sorry for a few days. Sometimes the *dhobi* loses an old shirt with many holes in it, but even then we feel sad and demand that old shirt back. As human beings, we are much concerned with material things. But are we as concerned about our spiritual losses? Remember, every second that we spend without the Lord Jesus Christ is an eternal loss.

Many years ago I met a grey-haired, almost bald-headed old man. When I questioned him, 'Have you experienced God's salvation?' he began to argue with me. He thought I knew nothing about the world, and whatever I said to him, he made fun of. He seemed to be thinking: 'He's just a boy. How can he help me?' After many months, I met the old man again. He came to me with tears and said: 'Brother, do you recognise

me?' I said, 'Yes, so many months ago you came to such and such a place.' Then he told me, 'After you left me, I became restless and even though I tried to forget your words I could not. He had been compelled by the Holy Spirit to read the verses I had given him. Then he said: I discovered my position, how I was living in darkness, and how the Lord Jesus Christ would forgive my sins when I accepted Him as my personal Saviour.' Then he began to weep and said: 'My life for sixty years has been wasted. Now I want to be used of Him. I have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ.' He kept saying again and again, 'My life has been wasted and the best years of my life are gone. Now, I want to spend the remaining few days to please my Lord.'

Do you know that your life is nothing but wasted in the eyes of God unless your sins are forgiven? In Joel 1:4 we read of four kinds of insects which eat away the crops of the farmer, - palmerworm, the locusts, the cankerworm and the caterpillar Sometimes the farmers with great hope work very hard day and night to till the land and sow the seed. The seed comes up but when the time comes for reaping the harvest, they find that something has come in and destroyed the crops. Maybe one part of the crop is eaten away by the palmerworm, and another part of the field by the locust, and a third part by the cankerworm, and the fourth part by the caterpillar. How much is left? Nothing!

All is gone! What does God say? Oh ye sinners, why do you waste your life?' Your life is like that field which is being eaten away by the palmerworm, cankerworm, locust and caterpillar.

When we were children we had many bad habits. In our stubbornness we kept on grieving our parents, doing many wrong things, and wasting our time, but afterwards we learned our mistake Then we said, If I had worked harder, I would not have failed in the exams As we grew older, we became slaves to the lusts of youth and by all those lustful desires we wasted the best years of life. Many young people when corrected and instructed by their parents and teachers will reply, 'What do you know? You do not know what life is! You are too old to understand. You don't even know how to use a cake of soap. You old Daddy, you wipe your face on the cloth that you wear, but we are university students. See this nice cake of scented soap, and this nice towel to wipe the face with! How can *you* teach *me* anything?'

That is how many of us in our youth have wasted our time, money and energy When we had a wealth of strength and opportunity, we live a life of shame. Then the time came when we began to earn money. By unfair means we earned and saved money for the love of money, and we became so proud. We said, How clever I am. In a short time I have gathered so much money When I retire, I will buy a piece of land and build a house with many rooms and live a life of comfort and pleasure and ease with my children and grandchildren around me.

But old age will come, and your children will leave you one by one. Your teeth also will fall out. Your money will go to doctors. Then you will weep and say: 'My life has been wasted for these forty years. My life

has been wasted and is gone. My years have been eaten by palmerworms, locusts, caterpillars and cankerworms.

Indeed, this may be your condition today. You are conscious that your life has been wasted and is being wasted. Be of good cheer. There is hope even for you. You can recover every loss. However great your loss may be and however humbling, still your loss can be recovered. Your life can be abundantly fruitful, and every minute you spend will yield everlasting fruit. That is why our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world. In John 15:5, He says, 'I am the vine and you are the branches.' It is by abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ that we may bring forth abiding fruit. Every past loss of any number of years, will be compensated. That is the wonderful miracle of salvation. Even though we have wasted our life in so many sinful and shameful ways, yet, by coming in to the Lord Jesus Christ, and by being joined to Him, we may become abundantly fruitful.

Sometimes unexpected losses come to us. We read in 2 Kings 4:38 that suddenly there was a great famine. There was no grain anywhere, because there was no rain. There was great barrenness and no crops and the people had to go here and there to gather something for food. They had no rice, wheat or vegetables. They lived upon herbs. Even in these days, though we may see grand buildings being built up in the cities, and new and wide roads being constructed, and very big colleges being opened, and all kinds of new things, because of which we may say that we are living in a very grand world, yet in the eyes of the Lord, it is only

a barren void. The Bible calls the world a desert and a horrible wilderness. One day all the old things will be removed and burnt up.

We read in 2 Kings 4 that the people, because of the famine, had to go into the jungle to gather herbs as they had no grain or proper food. They were living upon herbs. The very same condition exists even now in the world. On the one hand, people are boasting of worldly education, wealth and advancement. On the other hand, they are rotting in filth and defilement in sinful places. How much time they spend in cinemas and evil places. How much time they spend reading filthy magazines, which they carry about with them.

I have been touring in many different parts of the world for forty-three years and have met people in trains, buses, aeroplanes and ships. They were my fellow passengers and men of education and position. I have watched these people, both men and women, and have noticed that they carry with them the most filthy books, magazines and novels, and for hours on end keep reading these books. This only goes to prove how evil this world is.

When these men, in 2 Kings 4:39, went into the jungle to gather herbs, they saw some wild vines. They thought that these would be very nice and tasty for food, so they gathered them and put them into a big pot. They were misled by the colour of the leaves and by the hope that they were good for food. 'We have found something wonderful. We are going to have a nice meal,' they said as they cooked it. But, when the

food was being served and they began to eat, some wise man discovered something wrong with the food. So he cried, 'O man of God, there is death in the pot!'

Maybe he noticed by the taste or by the smell of that food that it was deadly poisonous. Some were just beginning to eat, and others had even put the food into their mouths, but they all stopped eating as if they were paralyzed. Their hands refused to go to their mouths. Why? Because they had been told that there was death in the pot! We are told that these men were good people and servants of God, but they had no understanding of herbs and that is why they had gathered this vine.

Unknowingly, with their own hands, they had put death into their pot. That is how men and women, though many of them are good people, are bringing death into their families. There are fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, sisters or brothers, who for lack of understanding, are bringing death into their homes and lives. Wherever they go, even though they do not realize it, they are causing their children to eat death unknowingly.

Those who are not born again are like that. They do not know how death enters their hearts and families, and they think that they are enjoying life. They think that they are living a life of pleasure. O you foolish men! O you foolish women! You do not know that you are carrying death with you wherever you go. Maybe through your words or conversation or through your habits, you are bringing death to others. Only by divine light can you change your condition. God's Word says

'The wages of sin is death.' Even one sin is enough to cause spiritual death.

There are some poisons which are very deceptive. Even a very little drop is sufficient to cause death and many have died by such means. So it is with a sinful thought, or word or deed. By these we eat and drink deadly poison. In the Bible story we say that those servants of God were very happily going to eat that food, but when they were told by somebody that there was death in the pot, they very wisely, instead of going to doctors or physicians, went to the man of God. They could have said: 'Let us go to Jerusalem for a specialist.' But they were wise men and they knew no specialist or doctor could save them from death. So they went to the man of God and said: 'Oh, man of God, there is death in the pot, we are about to die because we have eaten poison. Please help us now. In a few minutes we are going to die.

You are going to learn that same lesson one day. You have wasted your life laughing and joking and yet you are saying: 'We are living good lives. We are getting the best out of our lives.' But a day is coming when you will see that you are in danger of death, and not only you but your children and family as well. All of you are only fit for hell. By that time nobody will be able to save you.

The wise men in the story, however, very wisely went to the man of God (verse 41). At his command they brought some flour and he put it into the pot, and the effect of the poison was taken away. The Lord Jesus

Christ said, 'I am the Bread of Life and by eating Me ye shall live forever.' This is the only Bread that can take away the poison in your life caused by sin.

Now those people were hungry. No doubt they had been saved from the harm caused by the poison, but how could their hunger be satisfied? They were wondering: 'How can we get food to satisfy our hunger?' Then there came a man who brought to the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread and the prophet said, 'You serve the people' (verse 43). There were many men and only twenty loaves of bread. Those men were strong and hungry, and there were only twenty loaves to be divided among them.

I have seen in Punjab, men eating about eighteen *chuppatis* each and here we find only twenty barley loaves for a hundred people or more. So naturally the servitor said, 'How can twenty loaves satisfy their hunger?' The man of God said, 'Give the people that they may eat, for thus said the Lord, They shall eat and leave thereof.' So, they ate and ate till they could not eat any more; they were full up to the throat, but still much was left over.

There are those today who are trying to satisfy their hunger by worldly means. They spend much and eat much. They clothe themselves with fine and costly clothes, changing many times a day and every day, and every month buying new clothes.

Are they satisfied? There are some people who have many things to eat for breakfast, yet when you ask

them, 'Are you satisfied?' they say 'no,' even though they have spent so much money and have eaten so well. They have been eating and drinking death, and they will die without hope. But those who have eaten the Bread of Life, are free from every poison, and are satisfied with a small quantity and with whatever God gives. Their hearts are full of worship and thanks giving and praise to God. They have recovered the loss caused by drinking poison.

There is a poison that affects your stomach, nerves and brain. It works very slowly. So it is with sin! By living in sin you are eating and drinking poison every day and are ruining your life. Whatever you have will be wasted and ruined and you will end your life in the same condition and will go away from this world with nothing but defeat, shame and reproach. So we beseech you this day to eat the Bread of Life by faith. It will take away the effects of the poison of sin in your nature that you may begin to recover every loss. It will make you eternally wise, eternally rich, eternally strong and eternally satisfied and every past loss will be fully recovered.

David recovered all! Similarly, all the damage of the loss caused by folly, sin and defilement can be recovered. Only eat the Bread of Life from the hands of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Elisha, greater than all prophets and all other men. He offers to you this Bread of Life today.

Chapter 7

OBEDIENCE A SECRET OF RECOVERY

WE are returning again and again to the three words of our title because we believe with all our hearts that God has a message in this small fragment for us all. There are many things which are not made clear to us at first, but after many days, or months, or even years, they become clear. Though we may not fully understand what has been said so far, one day we shall be made to understand.

Now these words *"David recovered all,"* have a message both for those who are not yet saved and also for the saved. As long as we are without the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever we do and whatever we have, is wasted and mis-spent, and we find that many great men when they come to die without Lord Jesus Christ, arrive at the same conclusion.

A very well-known philosopher, Herbert Spencer by name, who lived many years ago, used to mock God

and the Bible. He thought he was very clever. When he was about to die his relatives came to him one day and said, 'Spencer, what is your last wish? And what are the words which you would like to be engraved on your tombstone?' He answered: 'Write these words, "Most Unhappy." Today you will find those words on his grave. All his cleverness and prosperity made no difference, because he died without the forgiveness of his sins. If you are living and dying without the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever you are doing in life is a waste. You can take nothing with you, and you will die without peace, without joy, and without God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ rose again from the dead to give us His life. He conquered death in order to do this and now when we accept Lord Jesus into our hearts, the new life He gives is called the new birth. When you receive Lord Jesus Christ, it will take you all eternity to understand how much you receive by faith in Him. He not only forgives us our sins, but He wants us to have everything that He has, and He wants us to be where He is. He wants us to have all the heavenly inheritance that He has been preparing for us long before the universe was ever created.

In some countries before young girls get married they have in their home a very large box called a 'Hope Chest'. Even though the girl may not expect to be married for several years, yet she keeps making things for babies, like napkins, frocks etc., and also many things for herself and her home, and very secretly she puts these things in the box. Nobody in the family except the girl knows what is in the box, but with hope

and expectation she goes on making things and putting them away, maybe for many years

This is a simple illustration of how long before the earth or man were created, our Lord knew us, and loved us and began preparing for us a heavenly inheritance Though He knew our weaknesses and failures and shortcomings, yet He planned for us, and is now preparing us on earth to enjoy that inheritance.

We see in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 that eyes have not seen, nor ears have heard the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. All these great and good things have been prepared by the Lord and the enemy tries hard to prevent us from enjoying that spiritual inheritance But our Lord also knew beforehand the trials and attacks of the enemy, and made preparation to help us to conquer those attacks.

Now those who live among thieves have to take extra precautions against robbery They require extra strong locks and strong iron bars to keep the thieves out. They know the thieves and their tricks, so they make provision to trap them Now the devil is far more cunning and clever than any worldly thieves are. You cannot conquer him by human devices or weapons. You require heavenly and spiritual weapons God has recorded the story of David in the Bible to show us both the warfare and the weapons. David suffered from two kinds of losses, personal loss and national loss. Whatever we have seen of David s *personal* loss was because of his own failure, carelessness and neglect, yet God wanted him to recover all Also, God wanted

everything to be recovered that had been lost *nationally* because of his failure and folly.

We have heard of a great and fertile land which the Lord God had given to His people Israel. The story begins in the book of Genesis chapter 12. There was a man called Abraham of the city Ur of the Chaldees. Chaldea was a highly civilized country, which has been proven by the archaeologists. Abraham was a wealthy man, and had plenty of gold and silver, servants, property and lands, but he was a pauper spiritually. At that time he did not know God, nor worship Him nor follow Him; but one day the Lord suddenly appeared to him and he heard the voice of God very clearly saying: 'Abraham, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house into the land that I shall show thee.'

Abraham believed that word and when he came home he called his wife, and his servants and said: 'Come, let us pack up everything; we are going on a journey.' His wife must have asked him, 'Where are you going?' He said: 'I don't know!'

When the neighbours and friends saw the things being packed, they must have asked him where he was going. He said again: 'I don't know!' His relatives came and saw Sarah and everybody in the home packing their things, and must have asked Abraham: 'Where are you going? We see you are packing your things. It seems as if you are going on a long journey. Where are you going?' Again he replied: 'I don't know.' 'But who knows if you don't?' 'Nobody knows! Just imagine those

neighbours and friends whispering among themselves, and looking very sad, saying, 'That man Abraham is mad, can you suggest some good doctors to make him well? Imagine they are going away, leaving their house, land and everything, and are not coming back. Above all they do not know where they are going!'

Everybody must have been quite sure that Abraham was mad, and were surely feeling sorry for him Perhaps his wife was feeling sorry too. My dear husband, he was such a good man. What has happened to him?' But Abraham knew he was not mad. He knew he had heard the voice of God, and that is why he had obeyed God had given to Abraham a great promise in Genesis 12:2, 3 'I will make of thee a great nation, I will bless thee and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing. I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee and in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed.' Here are seven great blessings promised by God to Abraham.

When a man obeys God, He blesses him. Can anyone receive a greater blessing than God gave to Abraham? Even though God spoke so clearly, only after many centuries did the children of Abraham understand the meaning of the words of God's promise When those people left Egypt to go to Canaan, God told them through Moses in Deut 7:1, that there were seven nations living in the land, who were enemies corresponding with the seven blessings. More than four hundred and fifty years before, God had promised to give that land to Abraham and to his seed God had not forgotten. God never forgets. Whatever God says, He remembers, and will do. What

promises He makes, He will keep. But He had to spend many, many centuries preparing his people for that inheritance.

In the same chapter of Deuteronomy, God told His people that all seven nations would be completely driven out from that land. This was said for a double purpose. First of all, those people who were living there had become slaves to every defilement, sin, and every kind of darkness. There is a long list of their sins in Leviticus 18, horrible, terrible, and shameful sins of all kinds. God waited patiently for over four hundred years, but they would not repent, so the time came when they must be judged and punished, and God used His own people to judge them.

God spoke to His people through Moses: Oh ye people, you are my people, my chosen people, my precious people, my peculiar treasure. You are my partners. Now you go and drive out the seven sinful terrible nations. The time is come that they must be dealt with, and punished! Then God said also: Do not make any covenant with them or league. Do not take their daughters to be your wives nor give your daughters to them in marriage. Break down their groves and their images.' God spoke so clearly, and still they did not obey fully. That was their first failure.

How often, though we seek to obey God, we do not obey Him *fully*. It may be that just in a few things we do not obey Him. It may be through human sympathy, or affection, or human wisdom that we do not obey God. So it was here. Having made one mistake, the

people went on making more mistakes. Joshua 1:12 shows this. They said: 'Now these men are our slaves. We shall use them to draw water for us.' Thus the devil gained ground. Later came mistakes in marriage, and then the people of God began to worship idols also. Even though they came into the land they could not enjoy the land.

That is the condition of many believers. They are born again, and know the Word of God, but are not enjoying what God has given them because of their partial obedience How many believers become married to unbelievers! In many cases the parents are responsible for these wretched marriages. They themselves are in darkness, and their own married life is a failure, so they drag their born-again children into darkness to live a life of misery also.

Sometimes, however, the young men and women make their own choice. They argue that although the other is not born again yet, perhaps gradually he or she will be born again' But when they enter into marriage the unconverted begins to pull the converted to his way. That is why, many believers are shedding tears all their lives. They have been ruined by their folly, weakness and blindness.

The men of Benjamin allowed a few Jebusites to remain in Jerusalem. They were first living there as slaves Later they became a very strong nation We read in 2 Samuel 5, that when David and his men came to Jerusalem, the Jebusites began to mock David. David was a mighty king and he went there with mighty

men, but the Jebusites at that time had become a mighty and strong nation. When they heard David had come, they began to say, Who is David? Even a blind man can go and fight with David They had gained so much ground in Jerusalem that they were mocking and ridiculing David, the man of God

Because of these Jebusites the whole nation of Israel had incurred a very great loss Even though they were God's chosen, peculiar and precious people and His treasure they were blind spiritually, and because they did not find out God's purpose, and because every man did those things which he thought right, they had lost their understanding of God and how to worship Him, and God was unable to work fully in them any more Because of this, as a nation, they were constantly attacked and defeated by people of other nations.

How sad it is to see that we as believers are also suffering many losses. I am not talking about nominal Christians, who are not born again. They are still in darkness and they do not know what they are losing. I am talking now to those who say they are born again. No doubt for a short time they had abundant joy, great zeal, great peace, and a great hunger for God s Word, but now we find them in darkness, defeat, failure, jealousy, and barrenness, because not only one but many Jebusites have found their way into their hearts, into their homes, and into their families

Those Jebusites were mocking David You will find the same when you allow Jebusites to come into your hearts and homes. They will mock our heavenly David,

our Lord Christ, and you will be mocked by your neighbours and friends and even by your relations. They will say, 'In what way are you better than we? These people call themselves believers and are living in adultery.' No doubt there are such Jebusites who are mocking the Lord Jesus Christ today in many places.

It was not an easy job for David to drive out those Jebusites God had to prepare him in His own way. First of all God took David through eight long years of painful suffering through Saul and Absalom and others Then He brought him to Hebron. There He kept him for seven years and six months and from there He brought him to Zion Only then was he able to drive out the Jebusites. At last the Jebusites were driven out from Zion. Then came the heavenly plan, then came the temple and then came the glory.

Now there are two very strong weapons required to drive out the Jebusites. One is called Hebron and the other Zion With these two weapons David was able to recover all.

Now what is Hebron? What is Zion? As you understand the meaning of these you will learn how to recover all the things you have lost I can say to God's glory that through these two weapons of warfare, Hebron and Zion, we can recover every loss; whether individual loss, family loss or church loss May God teach us how to recover our losses through Hebron and Zion. I am speaking of the spiritual Hebron and Zion. Will you not pray that God may teach you fully all about these two weapons?

First of all we must know what we have lost and how great the loss is. Then we must know how the loss can be fully recovered, and something added as well

For example, there was a man called Job. He was a worldly man at first. He was truly a good man and a wealthy man, but he was blind. Before men he was a great and perfect man, but before God he was spiritually blind, deaf, poor and imperfect He did not know this himself until God took him through the fiery furnace. In one day he lost all his children. In one day his buildings were burnt down. In one day his cattle were destroyed He had a great and terrible loss. His own friends began to accuse him falsely Even his own wife was against him. Why did God permit such a fiery trial? He did it so that Job could see his true condition and come into his true inheritance. Read Job 42:5, 6, 12, and you will understand why God permitted such suffering in Job's life. Through it God had become real to Job, and now he knew how to pray and talk with God, and in the end he got much more than he had lost. At first, like Job, we do not know what we are losing. We do not know our real condition spiritually, and God has to use some painful means to open our eyes that we may see ourselves as He sees us

Take another example Mount Everest, in the Himalayas, is the highest peak in the world. It looks very beautiful early in the morning at sunrise. There is a place called Tiger Hill near Darjeeling from which you can see Mount Everest, and people come from all parts of the world to see the peak. In 1856, three of us

went there, two of us and our guide. We had to go very early that morning to climb up to the top, which we did with great difficulty. There we found gathered more than two hundred people from all parts of the world. Then the sun arose and the whole sky was beautifully lit. One by one the people all went away after seeing that sight, till only four of us were left behind. I asked my friend, 'Can you tell me where the peak of Everest is?' He pointed and said, 'It is there, there.' So I looked and I saw a beautiful white point. As I looked it began to move and I said, 'How can that be Mount Everest? It is moving. It must be a cloud.'

So again I asked somebody else, 'Please tell me, where is mount Everest?' He said, 'Look behind you and wait for a while, and when the mist rolls away you will see Mount Everest.' I turned around and after a few minutes the mist fully cleared. Then we saw Mount Everest. It was a wonderful sight. Yet more than two hundred people saw only the cloud and thought it was Mount Everest and went away saying, 'We have seen Mount Everest! We have seen Mount Everest!'

That is our state spiritually. We think we have seen the Lord, but actually we have not yet seen Him. That is why God has to take us through some painful situations, in order to give us eyes to see.

David recovered all. God's glory came down. God too will come down to us and we will become His people and through Hebron and Zion we will recover every loss.

Chapter 8

SOME REASONS FOR LOSS

SOME things give us great joy when we recover them. Recently, two of us visited Pakistan and we had about two days of meetings in Lahore. We travelled by night from Rawalpindi to Lahore and we arrived there about 9.30 a.m. whereas the meeting had been scheduled to begin at 9 o'clock. As soon as we came into the compound a crowd gathered around us. It was a great joy to be welcomed by those loving people. We were very busy being introduced to them one by one. We had come by taxi and after we had finished the introductions, we were taken to our respective rooms to have a bath and change, before we went to the meeting.

When we came to our room we found that one bag was missing. That bag contained the shaving kit and other things. I was not too bothered about the shaving kit, but I was anxious about the passports and visas that were in that bag, as we had to leave Lahore the next day. We could not find that bag anywhere, though

everybody was searching throughout the compound. I thought anxiously, 'How long shall we be detained in Pakistan? Without our passports how can we leave Pakistan? Perhaps we will have to apply for a fresh passport and stay on here for another three weeks!'

Then the thought came to me. Maybe the taxi driver has taken away our bag, though not intentionally.' We had loaded some things in the back of the taxi and some in the front, and those who had been sitting at the back were so excited that perhaps they had forgotten to remove the bag But what could we do now? We had forgotten to take the number of the taxi Now taxi men are not very honest, so we thought of telephoning the police station Yet I felt that none of these things would help us to recover the bag. So I said 'Lord, I don't mind staying longer in Pakistan, but Thy work will suffer a loss in India. We have announced holy convocation meetings at Hyderabad '

So I prayed. Lord will you please bring back that bag yourself? If it is with the taxi driver, you please tell him to bring my bag back We don't mind losing the other things, but we want our passports After we had prayed thus, about a few minutes later, a man came into my room Brother, brother,' he said, 'we have found the bag How did you find it?' I asked. The taxi man had come back He had driven far, but somehow he felt afraid and came back with the bag. You could see great joy on everybody's face. Everyone in the assembly was full of joy We had recovered our loss and upon that recovery depended much of the

work of God. The recovery of this bag helped us to return to India to be in time for the holy convocations at Hyderabad, otherwise they would still have been praying in Hyderabad for our return from Pakistan! What a joy we experienced when we recovered something so valuable.

There are two kinds of losses: *personal* loss and *collective* loss. The first loss is what we incur individually, and the second is what is incurred by the whole assembly. Now the Word of God says that we as believers are members of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every member of the body is very necessary and precious. Some are tiny members, some are large members. Some may be small members, but in the body they play a very important function. When one member suffers the whole body suffers. Your finger may have some injury; it may be a tiny boil or sore, but that makes you sleepless because the whole body suffers. Likewise when we live a life of loss and barrenness as believers, then the whole body, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, suffers. Our loss is a loss to the whole Church. Likewise our recovery will be joy and blessing to all.

Once our Lord fed a large multitude of five thousand with five loaves of barley bread. Naturally there were many fragments left on the ground. When the people were filled, our Lord said to His disciples: 'Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost' (John 6.12). Why were these fragments gathered? They were not gathered merely for the birds or the animals. They were gathered for a purpose.

He also said: Your yea shall be yea, and your nay, nay. Sometimes when you visit a home they ask you: 'Would you like to have a cup of tea?' and suppose you say: 'Yes please,' you see their faces change. The fact is, they have no milk in the house, nor sugar. Only for formality's sake they suggested tea! They hoped you would say: 'No!' but you said: 'Yes!'

In the same way perhaps you also utter many idle words. You have forgotten that you have to give account for every crumb. The Lord does not like wastage. You have to give an account for every idle word that you speak (Matthew 12:36). Going by this standard, many of us have to confess that we have grieved the Lord several times.

Again we know that in the Lord Jesus Christ we have a great spiritual inheritance; it is a heavenly inheritance, and undefiled, which will never fade away. No man can fully comprehend it. It is so great that God's Word says: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him' (II Cor. 2:9). How true these words are! Again in God's Word we read in I Cor. 3:21-22, 'All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas or the world ...' Yet we continue to live a life of defeat and failure, because we do not know how to enjoy our heavenly inheritance. We see from the Bible that God planned to give man everything.

In the beginning, as we read in the first chapters of Genesis, God made Adam ruler over the whole earth.

If he had not sinned, he could have been king of the whole earth. When sin came, God's purpose was hindered, but God's love will never change. As God says in Jeremiah 31:3, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' We may change, but His love will never change. God's purpose cannot change.

We have seen in Genesis 12 how the God of glory appeared to Abraham. He offered him seven great blessings for eternity, provided he would obey God. He was asked to leave his kith and kin and country and go to a new place, where God had provided an inheritance for Abraham and his children.

Then we saw how in a subtle and wicked way the devil began to rob his people of their inheritance. Sometimes we do not know that we are being robbed. Once there was a missionary who was journeying in the third class. He was sleeping on one bench and he kept his suitcase on the opposite side. It had a very strong lock and it was also chained to the bench. He kept looking at the suitcase, but at last dropped off to sleep. When he woke up again he looked immediately to see if the suitcase was still there. The lock was still on it but when he pulled the case out, it was very light and empty!

How could the thief take away the things inside without opening the lock? he wondered; but when he turned to look at the other side of the suitcase, he found it had been slit with a knife and the things had been taken out. Though he had been watching the suitcase all the night, only in the morning he discovered his

loss. Many believers are losing their joy, their peace and faith in the same way; but a day will come when, by hearing God's Word and by coming into God's light, they will see what a great loss they have incurred through their folly and negligence and failures.

* * *

In the same way, through one failure a whole nation came under judgement, and God left them. They did not know how to approach God and they lived a life of shame and of darkness. But God did not change, nor did His love, and He planned that the nation should recover every loss. In these ways the Bible tells us of spiritual loss and also how to recover that loss. God's Word shows us that it is through Hebron and Zion that every spiritual loss can be fully recovered. For many years God was showing His people the meaning of these two things. It may also take us many years to understand this divine truth. But God is so long-suffering, He will not forsake us until we have recovered every loss. For this purpose of recovery God brought Abraham to Hebron.

God had appeared and said to Abraham so clearly, 'Leave your land, your property and your kith and kin and go to a land which I will show you.' He obeyed God. But by one small mistake he brought heavy loss into his life. This was a loss through wrong partnership.

When he was getting ready for his journey, his nephew Lot came to him and said, 'Uncle Abraham, where are you going?' He replied, 'God appeared to

me and told me to leave my kith and kin, my property and other things and to go to a new land.'

And Lot began to weep and said, 'My dear Uncle, you are more than a father to me, I have been all these years with you O my dear Uncle don t leave me here. I will do anything for you. I will be your son and do anything for you.' Abraham replied, 'My dear Lot, I am very sorry, I cannot take you with me God told me to leave behind all my kith and kin And Lot said, 'Please do not leave me, I am like a son to you. If you don't take me, I will surely die. I will commit suicide.' So by his tears Abraham was deceived, and his heart melted. 'I shall take him with me,' he thought, anyway, he is young and a very good lad. He will be useful to me. I will take him.'

But a time came many years later, when a messenger came running to Abraham saying, 'Please hurry up! Hurry up! Your servants and Lot's servants are quarrelling and fighting with each other. Please come! So Abraham went and saw the men quarrelling, and Abraham realized at last that God was right and he confessed: 'I made a mistake, Lord.' So he called Lot and said, 'Let there be no strife between you and me You love me and I love you, but these wicked fellows are bringing strife. We don't want to quarrel any more. You must make up your mind to leave me. If you go to the right, I will go to the left; or if you go to the left, I will go to the right.

So Lot looked around and he saw the fertile land; it was near Sodom. He thought to himself, 'Now I can

get much more than I had with Abraham. See I can have so much good fertile land.' He chose that land, it was indeed good land, but very near Sodom and Gomorrah

At that time the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were living very shameful lives of indulgence in sin. But Lot thought, I am not going to live in Sodom, but only nearby. I am two miles away from the city.' That is how he argued, and it shows that Lot had no real interest in the things of God. He was a greedy man who grabbed an opportunity when he saw it, though in the beginning he had professed to Abraham: 'I want to follow God and be with you.'

That is how so many men have gone away from God, and why so many men go abroad from India and other countries, to England, America, Australia or Europe. They go round proclaiming We have been serving God in India all these years,' but many of these men are scoundrels and rogues. They have gone with a motive of getting motor cars and money to build their own houses. Like Lot they have gone to a fertile land.

Because of Lot, God was not able to speak to Abraham clearly. God had been leading him from the very beginning, but at last He came to a stop. For, because of Lot, Abraham had lost the sense of God's presence.

If there was to be recovery, it could be accomplished only through *separation*.

God appeared to Abraham again, but only after Lot had separated from him. Please mark this fragment in the Bible, 'After that Lot was separated from him' (Genesis 13 14). When Lot had separated from Abraham then God appeared to the latter and said to him: 'All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.' God was now able to show Abraham what a great inheritance He was offering to him and to his seed forever.

The very same blessing is offered to every believer. Through some Lot in your life you may have become blind spiritually it may be a worldly friend, an ungodly husband or an ungodly wife, or any other ungodly association. Through human sympathy you are suffering loss in your life. God is saying, 'Don t take Lot with you!' 'Don't take Lot with you!

Some man s tears or some woman's tears may have made you disobey God. You have become blind spiritually and you cannot hear the voice of God, and you are unable to enjoy God's presence anymore; you are unable to enjoy spiritual inheritance and your heavenly privileges. You want only childish things. You have no hunger or appetite for the things of God, because of some Lot having come into your life You must separate from that Lot immediately, or you will one day discover what a great loss you have suffered because of your disobedience to God. Separate from

that Lot, and God will appear to you and will speak to you and pour His power into you

We are told that when God appeared to Abraham he came and dwelt in Hebron (Gen. 13:18). There he was full of praise and worship; he talked with God, and built there an altar unto the Lord — all because he had separated himself from Lot

What is the meaning of Hebron? Hebron means fellowship. We as sinners are banished from God's presence. No sinner can talk to God or hear His voice. You may see miracles, you may dream dreams, but you can never talk with God, unless your sins are forgiven. As sinners, God is very far from us; but when our sins are forgiven, then God is very near. You can go into His presence at any time and talk with Him, not only to ask favours, but because you love to be in His presence.

You see a baby in its mother's arms all day. If you should question the baby: 'Dear baby, are you not tired of being in your mother's arms for so many hours? I have seen you in your mother's arms from morning until midday, for almost five hours! Tell me, little baby, are you not tired?' The baby would surely say, 'No, I am not tired. I feel so comfortable here.' Would you think that was anything strange?

Perhaps after attending holy convocation meetings at Hyderabad, you feel like saying, We sit for hours in the meeting and I am so tired; my back begins to ache, my stomach gets so hungry. I want some food, and

coffee These people have no other business; they can stay in Hebron for many hours. But we are very important people, we are not simple folk, and for us it is a waste of time to be so long in Hebron. We know the message will not end until 2 o'clock and then they will serve food at 3 o'clock. Really it is a waste of time to be here.' If that is what you are saying, you do not know what fellowship is. You are blind. Because of some Lot in your life you are not able to enjoy true fellowship with God. When Abraham separated himself from Lot, God became real to him, he could talk to God as man to man and that is why he could leave his land and cattle and other precious things for God's sake. God was real to him

When Lot was with him, God was silent. He might have thought sometimes What shall I do? There is constant strife and quarrelling between Lot's herdsmen and mine. What shall I do? But God would not answer him until Lot went away from him. Then God Himself began to speak: Abraham, look towards the north, south, east and west Arise and walk in the land, in the length and breadth of it. Now his eyes were opened and he understood and began to talk with God clearly.

If anyone should question us, 'How do you know that God has forgiven your sins? You say again and again that God has forgiven your sins, but how can you prove it?' we would reply, I don't know. But one thing I know, I am able to talk with God, and my Lord talks with me every day. I can be in God's presence at all times, and it gives me great joy to be in His presence

We have much more joy in talking with God than in talking with any man. We know Him and He knows us, and through this fellowship we can recover many losses.

First we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and then with one another (I John 1 3) Unless we have true fellowship with God, we can never have true fellowshup with other believers. These two go together.

When travelling in the train, you may ask your fellow traveller not to smoke tobacco and the man refrains from smoking. But the moment the train stops at the station, he finds his way out to smoke. If his cigarette or *beedi* or matches are finished he will go to someone and borrow, because he cannot be without it for long. His interest lies in that. It is the same way with drunkards; wherever they go, the first question they ask is: 'Where can we get a drink?' They are only interested in that.

Among those who go to Hebron for the holy convocation, there are some who are more interested in purchasing saris to take back to their homes. But when you become God s true people, you have much more joy having fellowship with believers, than in spending time on other things. Some say the holy convocation is very good because we have such nice *rasam*, good *uppamavu*, and strong coffee. It all depends upon what you are interested in. There are those who are interested in true fellowship. Have you enjoyed talking to God? Can you sit for a long time in

God's presence? Have you enjoyed having fellowship with God's people, true fellowship in God's house? It is through such true fellowship with God and His people that you can recover many losses

The early believers were steadfast in fellowship (Acts 2:42) They continued steadfastly together. They were not anxious for land or for buildings or for fame or for name, but for true fellowship with one another. Those who are willing to have true Christian fellowship will become stronger and stronger spiritually, even though the enemy may attack them more and more. Learn to enjoy your privileges in God's house through fellowship with one another.

Abraham knew how to worship God when God appeared to him; he was ready to speak to Him (Gen 18:22) He even ran to meet Him. One day God appeared to Lot also (Gen. 19:1), but note this difference. Abraham ran to meet God, his joy was so great; whereas Lot just went forward and bowed down (Gen. 19:1-3). Abraham's joy was so great, he invited his angel guests, saying, 'Come inside and wash your feet and I will prepare some food for you.' He ran and called his wife Sarah, and said to her, 'Hurry up, Sarah, hurry up and get things ready!' He had a fatted calf killed and prepared a nice feast for them with great joy.

As for Lot, he said to the same guests: Please come inside, but they refused to come. Several times he pressed them to come in, but when at last they came inside, there is no mention of Lot s wife or daughters being called to prepare the feast. Why was that so? They were worldly

people If Lot had gone to his wife and said, My dear wife, hurry and prepare food for these guests what do you think she would have replied? Perhaps she would have said: You cook it yourself. I have not married you to cook for you. You can cook for yourself It would be the same with his daughters! If he went to his daughters and said 'Dear daughters, please help me to prepare food for these guests,' what do you think they would reply? Perhaps they would have said. Our faces are full of powder and our finger-nails are painted, so we cannot come You can cook yourself.' In the end Lot had to prepare the meal himself What a difference !

You see Abraham knew God. With much joy he went to speak to the Lord and was willing to sacrifice everything for God's sake. As for Lot, first he pitched his tent near Sodom (Genesis 13.12). Then in chapter 14 12 he went to dwell in Sodom. Finally in chapter 19:1 we find he was a leading man of the city sitting at the gate. Lot had become an elder in Sodom. Thus he had lost all his rights and privileges with God and he had become blind spiritually, all for the sake of worldly wealth and a worldly name.

As for Hebron, the first thing it speaks of is *fellowship*, *firstly*, of fellowship with God and, *secondly*, of *fellowship* with fellow-believers. Friendship with Lot will not bring you into this fellowship; you have to break up your worldly friendships and relationships, and then God will give you His own friendship for eternity

The second thing Hebron speaks of is *faith* The spies went into the land of Canaan and they saw giants there

and they were very frightened. But in Joshua 14:11-13 we read of a man called Caleb. He came to Joshua and said, You give me Hebron. Even though there are many giants there I can conquer them. I have proved God for many years. Even now I trust Him and I know that by His help I can fight the giants. Please give me Hebron. So Joshua gave him Hebron, and because of his faith, Caleb was able to drive out all the giants.

So Hebron speaks of *faith*. Do not be scared of the giants but be prepared to fight against them. You may see many giants and many hindrances and obstacles, but through your living faith you can conquer every giant obstacle and hindrance.

Chapter 9

DAVID'S FOURTH LOSS

JERUSALEM was built upon four hills and Zion was upon one of the hills. The Jebusites were living in Zion. Now by obeying God, David conquered Zion, and drove out the Jebusites However, in 2 Samuel 24:18-28, we read of Araunah, a Jebusite, still living in Zion. He was a good man, and God-fearing, and when David came to him to buy the threshing-floor, he said, 'Why, your Majesty, I will give you everything free. I will even give you bullocks for sacrifice David answered 'I will not offer to God anything which has cost me nothing.' The story of the threshing-floor of Araunah is the story of David's fourth loss. God had to bring David on two occasions to a threshing-floor (I Chron. 13 and II Sam. 24). A threshing-floor is the place where wheat is threshed, to separate the chaff from the grain. Then, by winnowing, the wind separates the chaff from the wheat

We have seen in I Chron. 13, how David consulted his captains and generals to bring up the ark to its place.

David should have known that God had laid down an order in which the ark should be carried, but he did not observe that order. The ark should have been carried only on the Levites' shoulders, but David carried the ark upon a new cart as the Philistines had done, and the wrath of God fell upon him. On the threshing-floor of Chidon, David learned what a great mistake it is to leave God's order and follow the methods of men.

Now in II Samuel 24, we read how David commanded his general Joab: 'Go, number the fighting men in our kingdom.' David knew fully well that he had never won any battle by his own strength, nor by the power of his army. He himself had said in I Sam 17: 47, 'God does not save by sword nor spear; for the battle is the Lord's;' yet now he wanted to make a show of the number of fighting men who were available in his kingdom. He had become proud, and was depending upon his armies for his victories.

Joab said to him. 'Your Majesty! You have won no battle by yourself. It is God who has fought for you. Why do you want to number these men? The Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold; yet they are not going to save you. It is only God who has helped you. However, David was proud and insisted on numbering the people. So the king's word prevailed. It is true that David repented and cried unto the Lord. 'I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now, I beseech Thee, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly,' but as a result of David's sin, God sent a three days' pestilence in the land and 70,000 men died. What a

loss! what a terrible loss! At last God stayed the hand of the destroying angel at the threshing-floor of Araunah.

This is the second occasion when God brought David to a threshing-floor. Why? To take away the chaff from his life. David has thought: 'I am full of wisdom. I know so many things!' No doubt he did, for from II Samuel 16 we know that he was a very wise man. Before his fellowmen, he was the wisest man in the whole kingdom. But in the eyes of God he still had much chaff in his brains and that is why God brought him to the threshing-floor of Araunah, to humble him, to bring him down, and to take away his human wisdom and self-confidence.

In II Chron. 3:1 we read that it was the very same place which later became the site of the temple, and out of that terrible loss to David and the nation, God gave not only forgiveness and full recovery but much more beside. God gave to David a heavenly pattern of the temple to be built later on by Solomon, David's son, who carried out all the instructions given by David his father.

He built the temple, and when the work was finished, and the temple was complete Solomon offered sacrifices in the temple. That was the happiest day for the whole nation. All the loss of so many centuries had been recovered. They saw God's glory, and God came and lived among them. He could speak to them from between the cherubim in the temple, and all nations had to come and bow before Solomon. They had

incurred great losses as a nation, terrible losses. Sin and defilement were everywhere and they were being constantly defeated by the Philistines, Jebusites and other people. But now the story was changed. Now they were God's people and God was with them in His full glory. Now there was real recovery, and they could truly be called God's people.

What is the meaning of Zion? (Read 2 Chron. 3:1, 1 Chron. 28:29, 1 Kings 6:7 and 2 Chron. 7:1.) It would take many hours to explain the full meaning of Zion, so let us look at a few points only.

First of all, in Zion the Lord brought David to the site of the temple. Jerusalem is a city built upon four hills and Zion is one of the hills. Now God wanted a place in Zion for His temple or house. Because the Jebusites possessed the city God could not find a place. But after many years of preparation, God brought David to Zion, to the very same place where Abraham went through his great trial in Genesis 24. God brought David to the place where he was fully freed from human wisdom, where he was totally broken and emptied of all chaff, and then revealed to him the site of the temple.

Secondly, God gave David the plan of the temple. In I Chron. 28:19 God gave him the whole plan and pattern of the temple in every small detail.

Thirdly, we see in I Kings 6, how Solomon began the work and finished it, and while building, there was never heard the sound of hammer or tool, because the

stones were already beautifully prepared in the quarry according to the heavenly plan. This speaks of unity and oneness and fellowship among God's people. There was no quarrelling, no fighting and no friction. They were governed by the Holy Spirit.

Fourthly, when the work was complete, God's fire came down and His glory filled the place. God began to speak and to speak plainly. That is Zion, the real Zion where God reigns in every heart and in every church according to the heavenly plan.

Some people think that by having a *pandal*, and a table, a cup, a plate and some song books they can start an assembly! It can never be done that way. God will have to take you through many threshing-floors before He can take away the chaff from you and give you the site according to His heavenly plan for a heavenly church. It does not depend upon money, or buildings or lands God wants a heavenly church, a spiritual church, where He can reign, and through which He can speak freely to His people. When the heavenly plan is manifested, then the glory can be fully seen. It is through Zion that God defeats the devil fully It is through Zion that He shows His wisdom and power, and there only can we see God's fullness and glory.

David recovered all through Hebron and Zion. Do you want to recover every loss? Then learn the meaning of Hebron and of Zion. Through prayer God will reveal all things to you. Then only can we repeat these words putting in our own name, 'David recovered all!'

Bakht Singh recovered all! Benjamin recovered all! By faith may these words be fulfilled in the lives of each of us.

Chapter 10

SECRETS OF RECOVERY

NOW there are two kinds of losses which we as human beings incur. The first kind of loss is caused when we do not have the experience of salvation and then no matter what we do everything is a failure and loss. It was thus with that famous king, Alexander the Great, who, having conquered so many lands and having acquired much wealth, complained that there were no more lands to conquer. He died at the age of thirty years, leaving one request that both his hands should be left outside the coffin. He also asked that, when his funeral procession was taken around the city, someone should precede the box saying: 'The great King Alexander came into the world empty handed, and is going out of the world empty handed.' When he died they carried out his instructions proclaiming the fact that so great a king was unable to carry away with him what he had acquired.

That is true of everyone. As a sinner, whatever you may achieve or accomplish, is only a waste. You will

have to come under the condemnation of sin and bear your punishment for eternity. On the day of judgement no man can save you from punishment, whether relations or neighbours or friends That is why men are afraid of death

There was a famous writer called Voltaire, who was also a great scholar He did not believe the Bible and professed himself an atheist. He did not believe in God, and ridiculed those who did. A time came when he became very ill and no doctor could diagnose his disease. At night he would often cry out with great fear during the whole night. His face would be so terrible that no nurse would stay with him for more than one night; and that is how he died in misery and darkness!

How are you going to face death? One day you will have to give an account to God for all you have done If you die in sin, then be prepared for God's judgement and for everlasting punishment in the lake of fire. God is a God of love, but at the same time He is a God of justice. He is a holy God and cannot behold sin.

There are three great laws which we must take account of: (1) the law of holiness; (2) the law of justice; and (3) the law of love. If you live in sin, you break the law of holiness. If you die in your sin then the law of justice demands your punishment But the God of love offers you the way of life and salvation You can be freed from condemnation and have a life which will yield abundance of fruit. The Lord Jesus Christ became man and died on the Cross to fulfil all these three laws.

Those who receive Him have these three laws fulfilled in them when they are born again.

The second kind of loss is suffered even by those who are born again, perhaps because of lack of knowledge, or perhaps through their own folly or sin.

There can be much loss through lack of knowledge. I was in London one night about thirty-five years ago, on my first visit there. It was a very, very cold night The next morning the landlady with whom I stayed enquired: 'Mr Bakht Singh, did you sleep well?' I said: No Madam, I shivered the whole night. It was so cold, that I put on my warm coat and also my socks. Yet I kept on shivering the whole night, because it was so cold ' She said to me, 'Why, did you not have any blankets on your bed?' 'No, Madam,' I said, 'I did not see any blankets.'

Then she said, 'Come, let us see.' She came to my room and lifted my bedspread, then I saw not only one, but three brand new blankets, which were under the bedspread. I had never seen such nice blankets in my life That was my first experience of such a bed. I did not know how to get under blankets and there I was lying like a fool on top of the blankets and shivering the whole night, with three nice, brand new blankets under me. This loss was due to the lack of knowledge.

There are many born again people, who have nice Bibles, which are sealed and closed books to them They put them away carefully, but do not know what is inside. They buy a nice gilt-edged Bible for about Rs. 25, but do

not know how to use the Book, nor how to claim and enjoy the promises in God's Word.

A missionary came to Punjab many years ago. In the villages there, they bake a very nice flat bread about one foot diameter and one inch thick. This kind of bread has to be baked very slowly in the pan. Then they apply butter to it and eat it with vegetables. The missionary was brought home one night and they placed before him the flat circular bread with the vegetables on it. The missionary ate up all the vegetables and returned the bread saying, 'Here, take away the plate!' He did not know it was bread. This is lack of knowledge. Because of lack of knowledge and understanding of God's purpose and plan, you may suffer heavy loss even though you are a believer, or sometimes through your own mistakes and folly you may bring heavy loss, not only to your own life, but also to the whole Church.

God promised Abraham great blessing. In Genesis 12:1-3, God promised him and his seed many eternal blessings but it was only after forty years of affliction and trial in the wilderness, that the children of Israel understood their blessings. They could have enjoyed the whole land of Canaan soon after they had left Egypt, but they did not obey God fully. In just a small thing they failed right at the very beginning, and that same failure became a big failure. Little losses often become big losses.

The God of love, however, did not change, nor His purposes. He went on dealing with them until they had recovered all their losses. In the story of Israel we

see God's unchanging love and His unchanging law, which go on dealing with His people until every loss is recovered. No man can change this divine law. Whoever he may be, rich or poor, king or beggar, a preacher or an ordinary man; divine laws cannot be changed. If we try to change them through ignorance, one day we are sure to suffer heavy loss.

God has made us His co-workers. He wants to fulfil His purposes in and through us. We have an example in the story of Eli. He was the high priest, but he failed God. God wanted to rebuke and punish him, but He had no one through whom He could do it. He had to wait for many years until He found Samuel to use as His mouthpiece. God spoke to Samuel when he was a little boy. He called to him 'Samuel! Samuel!

At first Samuel thought it was a human voice, but the third time he learned it was God's voice. God could have spoken directly to Eli and have told him: 'You have sinned; I am going to punish you'; but He did not do so. He waited many years and then rebuked Eli through Samuel. That was God's plan. God wants to have partners and co-workers with Him, but this is a great responsibility and privilege for which we have to be prepared.

Through all the stories recorded in the Bible we learn this lesson, that God's chosen people kept on grieving Him again and again. God had told them from the very beginning: 'You are my peculiar treasure—a peculiar treasure above all nations' (Exodus 19:5); yet they were blind and kept on grieving Him. Still God

did not give them up. He kept on dealing with them by sending His prophets to prepare them to become co-workers with Him. God may take many years, but He will not change His divine laws.

We have been seeing from God's Word the nature and causes of our loss. Now let us study the weapons and the means by which we can recover every loss. As we have already seen there are two great means which God uses to recover our losses, that is, Hebron and Zion. Through these two instruments God recovered every loss which came upon His people.

Abraham suffered loss through his human sympathy with Lot, but after he had separated from Lot God appeared to him. As long as Lot was with him, God could not appear to Abraham nor talk with him, and in the same way many believers have lost the privilege of talking with God.

Hebron means *fellowship*: firstly, fellowship with God, that is with the Father and the Son, and secondly, fellowship among ourselves, as we see in 1 John 1:3,4,7. A sinner cannot talk with God, nor be indwelt by Him. A sinner cannot find the will of God, nor can he understand God's plan, or purpose, or mysteries. God's life cannot be poured into him, and, even though he may see miracles and God may answer his prayers, yet he will be far away from Him.

In the life of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, when He performed miracles, many began to say of Him, 'He is Christ! He is Christ! He is our Messiah!' Even so, we

see in John 2:23-27 that the Lord Jesus Christ did not commit Himself to them They were saying: 'Lord, we believe in you,' but the Lord Jesus Christ was saying. 'I don't believe in you ' He knew that their hearts were full of sin and that they were not prepared to give up their sinful life. They wanted only exciting things. Unless we feel sorry for our sins and believe from our heart in Lord Jesus Christ, His life cannot flow into us.

When you walk in the street, you may see a beggar and he may call you, Father! But you will not call him, My dear son,' because you know he only wants your money. They say in Hindustani, When a man wants to get something, he will even call a donkey his father.' So some people when they want something from God, will call Him, 'Father! Such people are living in darkness, they do not know what true fellowship is.

When our sins are forgiven and our hearts are cleansed, there is a longing in our hearts to be in the presence of God. That fellowship with God enables us to have real spiritual fellowship with His people. In these days many prefer 'coffee fellowship' or 'tea fellowship' If we offer them tea, they will come; but if there is no tea or coffee, some friends refuse to come. They will say, 'It is so far away, how can we go there for a meeting?', but for a tea party, even though it may be ten miles away, they are ready to go. If that is true of you, you don't know what true fellowship is. The more we walk with God and the nearer we live to God, so much the more we long to enjoy fellowship both with God and with His people, the two go together, they cannot be separated

There are many who despise such fellowship with God's people Some people because of pride of wealth say, 'How can I have fellowship with such and such a person? He is a low-caste Christian and I am a high-caste Christian, while others say proudly, I am a B.A (perhaps failed!)' or 'I am earning so much money!'

Once there was a man named Charles in a certain city. He was earning Rs. 55 per month. He married a nurse, who was getting Rs. 120 per month, so together they earned Rs. 175. One day a man saw him in the street and said: 'Will you please come to the Gospel meeting?' He replied, 'Meeting? We have no time for such meetings ' In his heart he thought, I am earning Rs. 55, and my wife Rs 120, how can we go over to the meetings of these poor Christians? Those who are poor can go there. We will only go to the Church.'

But after five days I got a message from Mr. Charles: Please come and pray for my wife,' he said. I went there and saw him in tears His wife was very ill. Her teeth had got stuck into her tongue and the tongue was swelling rapidly. The doctors had tried all kinds of treatment, but it was in vain. He said to me, 'Kindly pray for my wife. Look, these are my children. What will happen to them?' and he wept. I was thinking in my heart, Now you won t say: "I am earning Rs. 55, and my wife Rs. 120." You will say rather, "Can Rs. 175 save me? Can my Rs. 55 save me? Can my wife's Rs. 120 save me?"'

When troubles come, you want God, but when you are prosperous and earning good money, you despise

God's fellowship and keep away from God's house saying, 'How can we rich people mix with poor people. Because of this attitude many believers have become spiritually poor and as beggars and paupers before God, because they do not know the value and power of fellowship. That is why you find so many Christians are happier among worldly friends than among God's people. They do not know how much spiritual loss they are incurring. To enjoy true fellowship you must be freed from every 'Lot' of every kind: worldly friendship must be utterly given up.

Hebron also means *faith*. We saw from the book of Joshua how a man called Caleb asked for Hebron, even though he knew that there were giants living there. He had faith in God, that He would give him the victory over every giant. To live in Hebron we must have strong faith in God; a faith that cannot be frightened by giants on our path. According to Mark 11:23, through faith even mountains can be removed.

Again, Hebron was a *place of refuge*. In Joshua 21:10, 11,27 we read that there were six cities of refuge set apart by the people of God. If any man killed a person unawares and unwittingly, he could flee to the nearest city of refuge, lest he be killed by the dead man's friends or relations. Hebron was one of those cities of refuge (Josh. 20:3). When people were in difficulties of that nature, they could find refuge or protection there.

There are so many people in the world who sin unwittingly in their foolishness. Somehow because of situations and unavoidable circumstances they are

tempted to do wrong, maybe through their friends or evil neighbours or because of being in a lonely place, or because of poverty, or difficulty. Or perhaps, because of their folly they suffer much unhappiness and misery through their unkind neighbours. Wherever they go fingers are pointed at them, 'See that man or woman, that is what he or she did.' Thus they suffer. Such people find relief through Hebron. They are being mocked at because they have fallen under temptation unwittingly, but in Hebron, through love, kindness and prayer, they can recover all things.

Let us not be proud. All of us can make mistakes. All of us can be deceived by the devil. If you see a weaker believer falling into sin then do not condemn him. Do not leave him or forsake him, but by love, sympathy and fellowship lift him up and restore him (Galatians 6 1-3).

That is the third meaning of Hebron. We have to bear the burden of those who are weak spiritually, when they fall or are in danger, by travailing and persevering prayer, and lift them up by love and kindness.

Many years ago a man came to me and said, 'Please pray for my wife and daughter.' He told me that when he was away on duty, they both had left the house. Then he began to weep and said, 'My home is broken up. Please pray for me.' So I prayed for him and he went away. After he left, a thought came to me that though that man came to me in great sorrow and with a very heavy heart, I only prayed for him in a casual

way. I felt convicted and began to pray, O God, give me a real burden of prayer for those who have been deceived by the devil. They must be rescued ! I went on praying for three hours, then God showed me that my prayer would be answered.

The very next morning after the meeting, I got a message that two sisters wished to see me They were the very same sisters for whom I had been praying They had come to me for prayer and said to me in tears, 'Brother, we were deceived by the devil We had gone so far away from home, and suddenly the thought came to us to go to you for prayer. So, we have come to you. Please pray that God may forgive us for our folly and sin ! The broken home was mended.

It is not by condemnation that we can recover lost souls. We believers are sometimes very, very hard-hearted. When we see weak believers we condemn them and start scandalizing and telling tales about them as well. We turn our faces away from them, too, and will not even smile at them. Many, many souls have gone astray, because strong believers have been hard-hearted towards them. Our Lord is the good shepherd, He goes after lost sheep He carries the weak sheep on His shoulders If you want to recover all, then be a refuge to those who have fallen. By prayer, strengthen them and by love lift them

Fourthly, Hebron stands for *utter dependence on God.* David made a great mistake. Without consulting God he wanted to join the Philistines and the result was that Ziklag was burnt; he had lost his wives, children

and stuff. Then when he repented and encouraged himself in the Lord, he consulted God as to whether he could pursue the Amalekites or not. The Lord said, 'Pursue'. He obeyed God and he recovered all.

From that day onwards, he began to consult God for everything. 'Lord, shall I go to any of the cities of Judah?' and the Lord said, 'Go up.' Then he asked again, 'Lord, where shall I go up?' God said, 'To Hebron.' So David went to Hebron. In every small detail he was seeking the guidance of the Lord (2 Samuel 5:19, 23 and 24). For every minor thing he was enquiring of the Lord, 'Shall I, shall I, shall I?' Thus David returned to Hebron. God kept him there for seven years and six months, that David might thoroughly learn not to depend upon his own brain nor anyone else's brain, but upon the Lord.

He was a great king and had many mighty men. When his enemies, the Philistines, came against him, he could have said, 'What shall we do? Shall we go?' But no, he consulted God in everything. That is the *fourth* way of recovering every loss.

Many believers and servants of God suffer heavy losses because they do not know how to consult God for their plans. Only occasionally they will consult God and call upon Him. On other occasions they depend upon their own brain, and their wives who can easily change their husband's minds. The husband may come home and tell his wife: 'My dear wife, the Lord spoke to me in the meeting.' But she says, 'Don't be a fool; you forget your wife and children. God does not speak

like that.' That is why many foolish husbands have disobeyed God. They are hen-pecked husbands who listened to their wives.

In this way many believers have lost out. Rather than consult God, they have consulted their wives or friends or neighbours or their own brains. One may say, 'I am a graduate, and know Greek and Hebrew, and so many other things. Why should I waste my time in prayer? I will use my common sense!' That is how people make many mistakes.

But when he came to Hebron in II Samuel 2.1, he had become emptied, humble and broken. In everything he enquired of God: 'Shall I go up? Shall I go up? Where shall I go? When shall I go up?' That is the *fourth* way of recovering every loss. Do not depend upon your wisdom or your physical strength or human resources. Empty yourself of every self-confidence and find time to go to God for *everything*. Ask Him even how you should spend your money!

There are many husbands who when they get their salary, bring it to their wives, saying: 'Madam, here is my salary.' When later the husband asks for Rs. 5, she says, 'What has happened to the Rs. 5 I gave you a few days ago?' and he is not able to answer. He is depending upon his wife; she is like a god to him. Whatever she says, he must do. When you ask such husbands 'Why do you give all your money to your wife?' they will say 'If I don't give her the money she won't leave me in peace. She will be searching my pockets. Then, finally, I will have to give everything to her.' Such men do not know

how to find God's will. You must learn to come to God about everything: about the use of time, money, energy, strength and everything else.

Similarly, God must be consulted in every church matter We touched briefly on this subject in an earlier chapter There are many men who wish to be church elders, who for many months quarrel and fight to win votes. In one city I saw a young man asking for votes. He was saying. 'Please vote for me to be an elder.' I questioned him: 'Why do you want to be a church elder? He said to me, 'These elders who are old men are no good; they must be turned out. If I am elected I will push them out.' Then I said to him, 'Can you tell me from the Bible the spiritual qualifications for an elder, how they are made and who they are? He kept quiet.

Then I said to him, 'Get your Bible.' So he went inside. I was sitting on the veranda. Five minutes passed, ten minutes passed, twenty minutes and he was still inside. Then his sister came to me and whispered: 'He has no Bible.' Yet this was the man who wanted to be an elder, --a man without a Bible, and who knew nothing whatsoever about the Bible.

Now when such committee members and elders meet once a month, they have a short prayer at the beginning of their meeting. They say, 'Pastor, will you please pray briefly?' After prayer they say in effect Lord Jesus Christ, we are now going to quarrel about things we would not like you to know, so please go outside. You should not know anything about our

money matters! When we want You again, we will call You. Then for three hours they go on quarrelling. 'How did you spend that 5 rupees, or 2 rupees or 1 rupee? Kindly account for it. Show us the bill for that 3 rupees etc. When they have finished quarrelling, they say, 'Lord Jesus, now please come inside. We are ready to go home Lord, bless us!' What mockery!

That is why you find barrenness and death in so many congregations. The so-called church elders do not know how to pray. They do not know how to find God's will. Yet, they want to govern and lead the church. They want honour, name, fame and money, that is all!

At Hebron, you learn that you must inquire from God, individually and collectively, concerning every action, every movement, saying: 'What shall we do? Where shall we go?'

Again, as we have seen, many people do not know how to find God's will concerning marriage. It is only after they have decided on the bride or bridegroom that they say: 'Pastor, please come and pray!' While searching for a bride they draw up a long list of qualifications.

The boy may be a matric failed, but when he looks for a wife, he demands that she must be a graduate. She must be a teacher and able to earn for him, though he himself may not have a job. She must be very fair, though he may be dark. She must know how to play music, and so on. In other places they may not look at

the face or beauty; but the thing that matters is the amount of dowry, whether, Rs. 5,000 or Rs. 10,000 and so on. They want only money, they do not want God's will. This is how many believers are ruined, and have unhappy ruined homes, because they have never learned that lesson of how to enquire from the Lord. Even with David, it was only after many years of suffering that he learned that lesson: 'Lord, shall I go? Shall I go?'

Chapter 11

GOD'S DIVINE LAWS

AS believers we go through much suffering and many losses, most of which are brought about by our own follies and failures. Nevertheless, all can be recovered if we obey the divine laws.

We have seen how God brought David to Hebron and Zion to enable him to recover all personal and national losses by following certain divine principles

After David had stayed in Hebron for seven years and six months, he came into Zion The meaning of Hebron, as we have seen before, is *fellowship*, and God had first to prepare David in Hebron, where he learned the full meaning of fellowship. After Hebron, David was brought to Zion, concerning which place there are seven things to be learnt. As you learn these things you will know how to come into Zion and how you can recover every loss through fellowship there (2 Samuel 5:6, 7, 10).

1. The Site

Zion was at that time occupied by the Jebusites because, as we have seen, the Benjamites had failed to drive them out from Jerusalem. According to Deut. 7, the Israelites had to drive out all the seven nations who were living in the land, and they were not to make any convenant with them nor inter marry with them. They were also to pull down their altars and images, so that there might be no sign even of their having lived there. Because of their human wisdom however they failed God; all the seven nations stayed there, and brought great loss to the whole nation of Israel.

In 2 Sam. 5 we read how David took Zion from the Jebusites and established his throne in the city. Alas! He became proud and blind (2 Samuel 24.1-10), and in his sinful pride he insisted on numbering the people, for which God had to punish him.

Pride is the greatest sin. Many believers have suffered heavy loss through pride. They may be good believers, knowing and believing God's Word, and making great sacrifices for God's service. Yet, with all their zeal, they have one great failure and that is pride. That was the condition of David. Though Joab had told him not to number the people, he would not listen and his command prevailed, so God had to punish him.

Then at the command of the prophet, David went to the threshing-floor of Araunah, and build there an altar to the Lord and in so doing found the site for God's temple. Even though David was in Zion himself,

yet he did not know the great purpose for which he had been brought there by God. God had brought him there to show him the site of the temple, where God could reveal His glory. That is the first divine principle about Zion: it is the site of God's temple. God brings us to Zion, so that we may see the place where God may have this habitation. David only found that site after being completely broken and humbled.

It takes us many years to learn that one lesson. Even though we may have many qualifications, God is not able to use us, because of some hindrance due to our pride. There are so many persons to whom God has given many gifts, but they are useless because of pride. In some cases they know it, but in other cases they do not.

God may use many devices to show us our state. It was only when God sent the epidemic in Jerusalem that day, that David was able to see his sin. Then he saw that God had brought him to Zion, because He wanted a place for the altar and later for the temple.

God does His work in His own way. He will not work in our way. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' In some places we work for many years and see no fruit, and in other places we work for a short time and we see much fruit. Why? God has His own time for each place, and we waste much time and energy by not knowing God's way of working.

Take for example the work in Hyderabad. Many friends had invited us to go there, but God did not give

us liberty. In fact, we came very near Hyderabad, yet God did not give us the liberty to go there. When the right time came, however, we had strong peace and said, 'Now this is God's time for Hyderabad.' In many places to which we have moved after waiting upon God, we have found that when we arrived there, it was God's time to begin work in that place. God has gone before us, we have seen, as it were, the walls of Jericho fall down, and God working out His plans in His own way.

We must first be brought into God's own way. That is the first thing to learn about Zion, and secondly, not to depend upon our own knowledge, strength, cleverness and qualifications for His service. Only when we are entirely cast upon the Lord, can we find the site of God's appointment. God chooses His own site to show us His power and glory.

2. The Pattern (I Chron. 28:11)

After God had revealed to David the site for His temple, He gave him next the pattern of the temple in writing.

This is the *second* divine principle of Zion, the heavenly plan for our personal life, family life and church life. As believers, God has a heavenly plan for each of us and He wants us to find that plan. After the site of God's temple has been revealed, God begins work, and the plan for our life is made clear to us. There are many people, who do not know what God has planned for their lives. They live in uncertainty, and go here and there without the knowledge of God's plan and

will, and thus incur great loss But there is a heavenly plan for each one, for personal life, for family life, and also for church life.

For that purpose we must come into Zion. By fellowship with God's saints, we can find His plan more easily Those who remain away from God's house will find it very hard to find God's plan If you come to God s house only for the sake of the message, you will not find His plan, though the message may be sweet to you Unless you learn these two lessons, that is, to have full fellowship with God s people, and also to maintain your fellowship with God Himself, God cannot give you His heavenly plan.

In that double fellowship, however, God will reveal His plan daily, monthly and yearly It is a great joy to see God's plan being revealed day by day and to be able to say: 'I know God wants me to be here today. I know God has brought me here. I know God has kept me here I know God is saying to me: You go here today and go there tomorrow. This ought to be true of us every day, not only occasionally Remember this, it was only after David was broken, that God gave him the heavenly plan.

3. The Material (1 Chron. 26:27)

Out of the spoils won in battle did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord The *third* divine principle is to gather material After the heavenly plan had been given for the Lord s house, the Lord wanted material to fulfil the plan. If you want to build a wall of mud, then you require mud for the wall, but if you

want a *pakka*' wall, you will require better material. It is the same thing with God's plan for building His house. If you have learnt this, then you will also know what material He requires.

When God had shown David the plan, David knew what God wanted; so from every battle David gathered the spoils. He knew God wanted gold, silver, brass and other materials for His house, as we see in I Chron. 29:1-2. So he gathered such material.

Now in our life-time, we too, have to face many battles, almost every day, and every week throughout our life. There are conflicts and battles in our hearts. We have also to face many battles through enemies, and sometimes through poverty and other problems. God permits those battles in our lives, that we may have the privilege of bringing the needed material into God's house.

David had to fight many battles that he might be able to gather much spoil. That gave him great joy for he was able to offer God all the material for His house according to His plan. God wants material. Once you come into God's plan, you will not be discouraged if you go through trials and difficulties. It does not matter how painful your difficulties may be, you will not be discouraged, because you know that through these afflictions, the Lord is helping you to gather material for His house.

It took many years for David to get the material for the house, so throughout life we may have to gather

material for God's house. It is only when we go to heaven and see the heavenly Jerusalem, that we shall know what we have gathered and how much.

4. A Wise Master Builder
(I Chron. 28:9-10; I Cor. 3:10)

After David had found the site for the temple and had received the plan and gathered the material, the next thing he wanted was a wise master builder.

When a building has to be constructed there must be an engineer; a man must be in charge of the whole building; and he has to make sure that the whole building is being constructed according to plan. Now David wanted a man of that type, because the building of God's house was very great and could not be built by ordinary men. David called Solomon and said, 'Solomon, my son God has chosen you to build His house. He has chosen *you*, be strong and do it. Here is the plan and here are the materials. Now you go ahead with the building of the house.' So Solomon became a wise master builder.

We see in the New Testament that the apostle Paul was a wise master builder and through him God's plan was carried out. This is the *fourth* divine principle of Zion. We require wise master builders to build us up in God's plan. Mere teaching won't do, we require apostles, prophets, teachers and pastors to build us up in God's plan (Ephesians 2:20). In the early church, there were such faithful men going here and there and because of their faithfulness, God's work was built on a strong foundation. It is the same in every period. If

you want the work of God to be strong and steadfast then you must have God's chosen vessels, who will fulfil God's mind and plan and who will be faithful

When God chose Solomon (I Kings 2:12, 3:11) he asked God to give him wisdom (I Kings 3:5, 9). This is how he became a wise master builder. He asked for divine wisdom and an understanding heart that he might discern between good and bad He did not ask for wealth or long life or health; he asked only for divine wisdom that he might become a wise master builder.

Those who have divine wisdom, will by that wisdom know clearly the mind and thought of God. If the work of God is to go on peaceably, there must be men of apostolic vision and experience.

5. Skilful Workmen
(I Kings 5:1, 6, 18)

Fifthly, even though Solomon had plenty of wealth and material, and also had skilful workmen in his own kingdom, he knew that they were not sufficient to build the house of God. So, he wrote to Hiram, King of Tyre, Send me cedar trees out of Lebanon and send the men who can work on the timber and stones

Now for the work of God, God needs all kinds of workmen. God needs skilful workers from every part of the world. Just as Solomon brought those workmen from many parts of the world to work on the trees and stones, for God's work too we require men and women from all parts of the world, because a country by itself cannot build God's house However much wise that

country may be, or wealthy, they cannot alone build God's house. We require 'timber' and stones from every part of the world. That is the *fifth* divine principle of Zion. It is only when we begin to build the house of God that we realize how much we need co-workers from every part of the world. Only then can the work go on smoothly.

6. Harmony and Unity (I Kings 6:7)

Sixthly, even though they were using heavy stones and large timbers for building, and huge beams, there was no sound in the temple of any instrument of any kind. The workmen went on working quietly and smoothly, because everybody knew his own job very well and knew also the plan given by God. Other workmen were working in the quarry, and the stones brought from the quarry fitted in so well because they were faithfully prepared.

If we know God's plan clearly and have the heavenly material and a wise master builder and prepared co-workers then the work of God will go on quietly and smoothly. Where there is no plan there will be much quarrelling, strife and fighting. Those who do not have God's plan like to quarrel and fight. It is very necessary to know God's plan, so that God's work will go on in perfect unity and harmony.

7. God's Glory (II Chron. 7:1, 2)

Seventhly, when Solomon made an end of praying the fire of God consumed the burnt offerings and sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

God's glory came down only when the work was finished and it is only when the work of God is finished that we too shall see His glory. Unfinished work cannot be to the glory of God. When the tabernacle was finished the glory of the Lord came down. Even so with the temple. When the work was finished and the heavenly plan was accomplished God's glory came down and God began to speak and reveal Himself in all His fullness.

The whole nation and kingdom was filled with joy and gladness (II Chron. 7:8-11). Everybody got a share of that joy. God began to speak and said, 'I have heard thy prayer. I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice' (verse 12). 'My heart and my eyes shall be perpetually upon it.' So God came to dwell with them in all His fullness. God in His purpose brought David to Zion that He might reveal Himself there to all His people.

Let me repeat again the *seven* divine laws or principles in Zion. 1. The finding of God's site of the temple. 2. The heavenly plan for the temple. 3. Material for the temple. 4. A wise master builder, who had the supervision of the whole work of building. 5. Skilful workmen required from all parts of the world. 6. The whole work carried out smoothly in harmony and unity. 7. God's glory coming down and filling the House. Then was God's purpose in Zion truly fulfilled, for God was revealed there and reigned in glory.

Chapter 12

THE SECRET OF POWER WITH GOD

IN this study we have been considering from God's Word how our spiritual losses can be recovered. We have pointed out how God had planned that man could recover every loss through Hebron and Zion. Hebron speaks of fellowship, first with God and then among ourselves as fellow believers. Zion speaks of God s heavenly or spiritual House. The more we understand what that spiritual house is, the more we can recover our losses. We have mentioned how God led David step by step into Zion, for it was only when he was brought into Zion that the national losses were recovered.

When Solomon built the temple as commanded by God, then God came in His full glory into Zion. He began to speak in a clearer way to the whole nation, and all the people rejoiced with great joy, and came into God's house with great expectation. We can say, in simple language, that God became more real to them

We learn something more about Zion from Psalm 87:2, 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.'

The Dwellings of Jacob

Jacob stands for a man whom the Lord chooses. God chose Jacob with all his follies, shortcomings, and weaknesses, but Jacob had to go through many experiences before he could understand God s purposes for him For more than twenty years Jacob tried to obtain and enjoy by his efforts the blessings which God had planned to give him. From his childhood he had heard from Isaac about the portion of the first-born son, so he tried to get that portion by deceiving his father with the help of his mother

Again in the house of his father-in-law he tried to do the same things. He was miserable when he left his father in law s house. Even though Jacob had plenty of cattle and much wealth, yet we find him full of fear (Genesis 37) 'All the dwellings of Jacob in Psalm 87:2 speaks of all that he had been doing himself, his own efforts, his own struggles and his own battles and all his human efforts to obtain God's blessing He was trying to get the portion of the first-born by human methods.

There are many believers of the same type, they try to enjoy God s blessing by human effort. They try to serve God by human wisdom, but in the end they are disappointed Even though they study the Bible for years together, and seek to understand the Bible by human wisdom, their lives reveal that they are

defeated. They spend much money in God s service, but see no fruit. They suffer much for God s sake, but have no joy in their lives. They pray for many hours, but have no joy in their lives. They pray for many hours, but receive no answer to their prayers. Why? Because they are doing these things by their own efforts, like Jacob. By human efforts, human plans and human wisdom they try to receive heavenly joy. Such people are living, as it were, in 'the dwellings of Jacob

The Gates of Zion

The gates of Zion' (vs. 1). God's love is towards Zion. A gate indicates that there is someone outside who has to come inside. The Scripture says, 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion. God Himself loves and rejoices to enter the gates of Zion, and if we also would enjoy God s love in its fullness we must become a part of Zion.

The foundation of Zion is in the holy mountain (vs. 1). There is a strong and sure foundation which cannot be shaken, and that foundation is in the holy mountain. When we long to become perfectly holy, as God is holy, He brings us on to a strong foundation.

The city of God (vs. 3). This is another name for the place. 'Zion' and 'City of God' are interchangeable words.

The Highest Himself shall establish her' (vs. 5). Those who are living in the dwellings of Jacob depend on human energy for their establishment, but those who come into Zion, will be established by God Himself.

'The Lord shall count' (vs. 6). God makes a record of everything about those who live in Zion. Whatever we do by ourselves is only a waste, but whatever we do in God's house is being recorded to be remembered for ever.

'The singer' (vs. 7). In the dwellings of Jacob, there will be tears, sorrows and disappointments; but in Zion there will be singers and players on instruments singing heavenly songs. That speaks of great joy. The joy in Zion is so great that the players on instruments are rejoicing together.

'All my springs are in thee' (vs. 7). Springs speak of a hidden source of water supply. Nobody knows the actual quantity of water in a spring. It has fresh water running constantly and does not get dry. So God says here that those who are in Zion have plenty of springs to bring them delight.

It is only in Zion we can recover every loss, so the Lord continually seeks to draw our attention towards Zion.

Abraham and Melchizedek

Genesis 14:18, 19. This is the first reference to Zion in the Word of God. The name Salem means peace; and Salem or Jerusalem is the city of peace.

(1) *Not a shoe latchet*

Abraham was about to face great temptation. He had been in the field of battle and had defeated the enemies of the King of Sodom and had brought back the men of Sodom and plenty of wealth. The King was

grateful and wanted to reward Abraham, so he offered to him all the treasure they had taken. What a great temptation it must have been to Abraham!

However, before Abraham faced this temptation and before he could be deceived by the King of Sodom' God had sent him Melchizedek, the King of Salem, and priest of the most high God, who had blessed him (vs. 19) When, therefore, the King of Sodom offered all the wealth, Abraham refused to touch even a thread or a shoe latchet. He had been in the battle-field and his shoes might be worn out, and his clothes might be torn He might want a shoe latchet for his shoes and a thread to mend his clothes But he refused to take even such insignificant things from the King of Sodom

It needs faith to take such a strong stand. How did Abraham get such faith? From Zion had come Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, and from him Abraham had received a true blessing, for Melchizedek blessed him in the name of the most high God who is the possessor of heaven and earth. Abraham received from Melchizedek a far greater blessing than the King of Sodom could give him, and through Melchizedek Abraham got a glimpse of Zion which increased his faith, and enabled him to resist even so great a temptation.

(2 *Bread and Wine*

Not only did Melchizedek bless Abraham, but he also brought him food from Zion he gave him bread and wine (Genesis 14 18) Abraham was tired because he had been on the battle-field. Yet, had the King of

Sodom offered Abraham fowl or mutton or '*biryani*', Abraham would have said 'No thank you. I don't want your fowl or mutton or anything else from you.' The King of Sodom would gladly have fed Abraham and his men because Abraham had delivered them from their enemies.

Yet, Abraham turned his back on the nice things the King of Sodom offered him for God had already sent Melchizedek with food from Zion. The priest of the most high God had brought bread and wine for Abraham, that had taken away his weariness. You will find your tiredness and weariness flee away when you come to the Zion of God.

When people do not feel too well, they seize the smallest excuse to keep away from the house of God. They say, 'We cannot go to Hebron. The meetings are very, very long and we are not too well. We had a bad night yesterday.' They think that by keeping away they will get better. So they keep away and become worse!

There are others who when they feel sad and dejected keep away from the house of God. Perhaps somebody has said something to them which has hurt them and they keep away, but by keeping away they become worse. It is by coming into God's house that God's people receive heavenly food and divine strength and joy and keep fresh, strong and healthy before God and like Abraham are able to resist every temptation.

(3) *Tithes*

Abraham believed that every blessing came from

God and that is why he gave his tithe to God (Genesis 14:20).

Now when Melchizedek blessed him, Abraham believed that it was truly God who had delivered him from his enemies and had given him so many great blessings. Because of that he gave God one-tenth of all that he had. The tithe speaks of his faith, and is also the expression of thanksgiving. By it Abraham was saying, 'God has blessed me, and has given me much more than I could have received by my own strength or efforts.'

That is quite true. We cannot enjoy anything unless God blesses us. Though we work very hard and earn much money, yet, if God does not give us good health how can we enjoy that wealth? And if God does not give peace in the family, surely all our earnings will be a waste. We require divine favour to enjoy what we have. Without His favour we have nothing, and can enjoy nothing.

Abraham and Mt. Moriah

According to II Chron. 3:1, Mt. Moriah is the place where Abraham passed his last test (Gen. 22). God appeared ten times to Abraham, and the tenth time He appeared to him in Mt. Moriah. He had to pass these ten tests to become the friend of God. God brought him to Zion to pass his last test.

After this, God was fully bound to Abraham. Abraham had obeyed God and whatever God commanded, he did. He took his only son, laid on him

the wood of the burnt offering, and went to Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22:9). Without any question or doubt, he placed his son upon the altar, stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. Then God called to him, 'Abraham, Abraham, lay not thy hand upon the lad' (Gen. 22:11, 12); and when he turned round he saw a ram caught in a thicket.

There was no chance of the ram running away. God Himself had brought the ram, so how could it escape from God's hand? It had not been brought there by any man. The ram had been caught in a thicket for a purpose, and God was speaking to Abraham through it. He was saying: 'Now Abraham, you have fully obeyed me. You have never doubted me. What I commanded, you have done. Without question or doubt you have obeyed me. You have passed your test.'

Further God was saying to Abraham, 'You see the ram bound in the thicket? In the same way, I am also bound to you. In the beginning I commanded you and you obeyed me. Now you command me and I will obey you.' What a privilege! Now Abraham could command God! God was bound to Abraham for eternity, and even today He is keeping His covenant with Abraham's seed. Even though Abraham's seed failed God, and rebelled against him, yet God said to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', because of the covenant He had made with Abraham.

In the same way when you come into Zion without fear or doubt, God is bound to you. You can command

God to do anything and He will do it for you. Can any man give us so much? Foolishly we depend upon ourselves, our human wisdom and strength for victory when it is only by coming to Zion that God can be fully bound to us and by faith we can recover every loss. Abraham had made many mistakes: he had listened to Sarah his wife and married Hagar and that was a terrible mistake; so much so that the Ishmaelites were a source of constant trouble to God's people, yet Abraham recovered all in Zion. We too may incur many losses, yet by coming into God's house or Zion, we will recover every loss.

Now by coming to Zion, Abraham was given real faith. No doubt in the beginning he had some faith, for when God spoke to him, he obeyed and left Ur of the Chaldees. This was a great sacrifice, for he left his home and family and property behind; yet this was only an imperfect stage of faith. It was only in Genesis 22 when he came to Zion that he was given true faith, and believed the Lord would raise up his son even if he slew him. He was about to slay his son on the altar, but at the same time he knew God would not change His word, but would raise him up again. Such faith is not easy to have.

Do not keep away from God's house nor despise it. Do not despise the fellowship of God's saints, but take your full share in the house of God and then you will surely recover every loss.

These two lessons from the life of Abraham are very important to learn. Honour God by your substance and

acknowledge that God alone can bless you; this is the first lesson. The second is to come into God's house with strong but simple faith and then you will be wholly and fully bound up in the purpose of God.